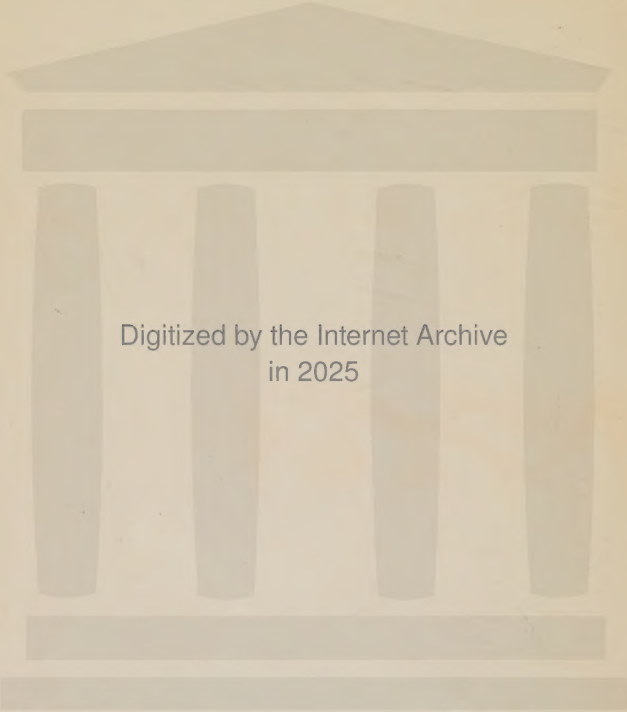




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*O. HENRY MEMORIAL
AWARD*

*PRIZE STORIES
of 1928*

O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARD

PRIZE STORIES

of 1928

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS

AUTHOR OF
"A HANDBOOK ON STORY WRITING"
"OUR SHORT STORY WRITERS"
ETC.

HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, HUNTER COLLEGE
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK



GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.

1928

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For the Committee the chairman thanks authors, editors, and agents, with whose friendly coöperation this volume is prepared.

BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS.

New York City,
November, 1928.

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INTRODUCTION

TO PRODUCE this, the tenth volume of the series, the O. Henry Memorial Committee of Award read more than two thousand stories written by American authors and published in American magazines from October, 1927, to August, 1928, inclusive. Above the discards more than one thousand remained, from which fifty ranking highest in the opinions of at least two members of the committee were chosen for further consideration. By the usual process of selection, eighteen stories survived. Seventeen of these are reprinted in the following pages.

The readers and judges were

1. ISABEL WALKER, A.M.
2. HARRY ANABLE KNIFFIN, story writer *
3. FRANCES GILCHRIST WOOD, Litt.D., story writer *
4. BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS, Ph.D., Chairman;
Head, Department of English, Hunter College of
the City of New York
5. ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD, story writer and dramatist†
6. FRED LEWIS PATTEE, writer, editor, Professor of Eng-
lish, Pennsylvania State College
7. FRANKLIN T. BAKER, writer, editor, Professor of Eng-
lish, Teachers College, Columbia University

1, 2, 3, 4 *Readers, First Judges*

3, 4, 5, 6, 7 *Final Judges.*

The table on following page indicates the widely differing opinions of final judges, the comparative ratings of all stories

*Member Authors' League of America.

†Vice President Writers Club, New York City.

INTRODUCTION

found in the first or second place on any one list, and the prize winners.*

STORIES	RANK WITH THE SEVERAL JUDGES					SUM OF RANKINGS
	Mumford	Wood	Williams	Pattee	Baker	
Never in This World. . .	1	14	3	8	18	44
The Parrot. . .	4	1	1	14	6	26
River Witch. .	17	7	5	1	9	39
Hot Copy. . .	3	9	7	11	1	31
The Glass Eater	2	18	11	18	17	66
Home Is the Sailor. . .	11	2	8	13	10	44
Bloody Ground†	15	3	2	15	2	37
Soldier, Sleep. .	5	16	9	2	5	37
The Peculiar Treasure of Kings. . .	7	6	4	4	7	28
JUDGES	STORIES: FIRST PLACE					STORIES: SECOND PLACE
Mumford	Never in This World					The Glass Eater
Wood	The Parrot					Home Is the Sailor
Williams	The Parrot					Bloody Ground†
Pattee	River Witch					Soldier, Sleep
Baker	Hot Copy					Bloody Ground†

The sums of rankings nearest 1 (first place) are 26 and 28, with average ratings of 5.2 and 5.6. The first prize, \$500, is awarded to Walter Duranty's "The Parrot," first published in the *Red Book*, March, 1928; the second prize, \$250, is awarded to Marjory Stoneman Douglas's "The Peculiar Treasure of Kings," first published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, November 26, 1927.

Miss Shirley V. Long, instructor in story writing in Columbia University and Hunter College of the City of New York, judged the ten short stories ranking highest and awarded the special prize of \$100 to Zona Gale's "Bridal Pond," first published in the *American Mercury*, February, 1928. The runners-

*For further details, see Contents, Introduction below, and the Lists, page 271.

†Reprinted in this volume as "Curtains." The title "Bloody Ground" is reserved for the volume of Mr. Tarleton's short stories published by the Dial Press, New York.

up were Ring W. Lardner's "There Are Smiles—" and Dorothy Parker's "A Telephone Call."

A correspondent in Russia, whose reports in the *New York Times* read not infrequently like mad romance, is author of the romantic melodrama, "The Parrot." If, as he convinces through his realistic detail, the characters and action are factual, he succeeds remarkably well in adhering to the aims and technique of fiction; and, as any writer knows, converting fact into fiction is one of the most difficult tasks the storyteller can set for himself. If wholly fictive, "The Parrot" is straight testimony to the worth of journalistic training as preparation for the fictionist. Mrs. Wood remarks that the story grips with the instant conviction that "here is a story of the actual Russia, neither guessed at nor faked." Professor Baker, who placed the story sixth, says, "The Parrot is a grim, realistic bit of melodrama. The garlic resolution of the plot is humour, of course, but appropriate to the farcical tragedy of Sovietism," Sergey McTavish is a near relative of Kipling's Kim, but he possesses an engaging personality all his own; and his opposing the wretched Baba Papagai with a bane to kelpies loses nothing through his ignorance that the bane is poison to parrots. Someone will declare seriously that not all parrots dislike garlic, but the story convinces that Baba Papagai's bird had for it a decided and decisive aversion. Edwin Balmer, editor of the *Red Book*, observed that "The Parrot" seemed to him altogether unusual.

"The Peculiar Treasure of Kings," by Marjory Stoneman Douglas, is not the author's best story; it may not be her best of this year even, for "Twenty Minutes Late for Dinner" (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 30) is exceedingly well done and tensely entertaining. The high average place with all the judges, however, justly entitles "The Peculiar Treasure of Kings" to the second prize. The poignancy in Johnny Mathew and Young Mat's relations, in that the son was never to know his father, is offset gloriously in the old man's triumphant knowledge that he was the father of a man. Beyond the human problem, skilfully solved, the author's way with the *Mary Parsons*, whose decks filled with "prophetic murmur of full sails and taut cordage and a long wake curving and whitening behind," her jib boom thrashing

steadily at the southward horizon, while she sailed down the latitudes—this is the way of a sailing ship's master and a master of vigorous descriptive narration.

"Bridal Pond," a miniature psychological mystery, catches and holds with tendrils of suggestion. Was telepathy at the bottom of Jens Jevins's obsession? Had his criminal intention worked with the report of the Sun Prairie marriage to a backward vision of his own honeymoon and its disastrous termination? Had "it come on him all of a rush," as his wife supposed, and was he guiltless even in thought? The wife's wish that they were starting over and Jens's laconic "I don't" sound a Hawthornesque strain: "—we have died in the safety of our youth and not in the deep of days already dead." Every reader will interpret the story a trifle differently from all others. Its felicity lies in challenging the reader to make out the case for himself.

Mrs. Mumford did not state her reasons for placing first "Never in This World." The chairman ranks it third for its novelty of theme and its sentiment, delicate without mushiness. To create for a child a world in one "not what you would call a little child's world" requires something of divinity in fatherhood. How well Paul Dodd succeeded the climax reveals when the Princess Susanna saw on the balcony of the Palace the Prince in his purple robe, wearing his golden pointed crown. Making a fairyland of New York City, palaces of its towers, may have been done or may not have been done better; but we do not remember anything that so beautifully transforms stone and mortar as this unexpected magic of Stephen Morehouse Avery.

Roark Bradford, whose "Child of God" won almost unanimously the first prize in 1927, has published this year a number of first-rate tales, of which the best in the opinions of the committee are "Cold Death" (*Harper's*, July) and "River Witch." In assigning first place to "River Witch," Professor Pattee writes: "I choose the tale as my choice from the twenty submitted because of its genuineness, its unobtrusive artistry, its revelation of fundamentals of human life. Ruby is a grossly ignorant and superstitious negress, but nevertheless she is the eternal feminine. The call of the river witch is the call universal, and Ruby's struggle is the age-old

one that every daughter of Eve is liable to know. And her triumph leaves the reader with a thrill of surprise." The chairman, who places the story fifth, seconds these reasons of Professor Pattee.

"Hot Copy," says Professor Baker, "is the best story of the lot, in my opinion, by a good long lead." Prejudiced in its favour because it is a trenchant satire on journalistic ethics, he adds, "And the story is gripping: one remembers it. The slangy, callous, limited, go-getter reporter who speaks is consistently self-revealed; the contrast with the other reporter well done, though the victim, Dodd, is perhaps overdrawn in his ruin." "Hot Copy" is third on Mrs. Mumford's list, third in the sum of rankings.

"Curtains," reprinted from *McClure's*, where it appeared under the title "Bloody Ground," ranks second with two judges and third with another, but dropped to fifteenth place on two lists. It is one of Fiswoode Tarleton's best brief epics of Kentucky. Professor Baker comments that it "handles the local colour with extraordinary definiteness and concreteness, and works steadily up to its climax of violence." And Mrs. Wood writes, "I do not remember a better told story of the dramatic evolution of the ballad." The chairman who has admired Mr. Tarleton's work since it began to appear in the Rocky Mountain *Echo*, selected "Bloody Ground" ("Curtains") as the best of the year in *McClure's*.

Mrs. Mumford's second choice, "The Glass Eater" (*Forum*, February), ranks, by the combined votes of all judges, below the same author's tale of O'Meara, which is therefore preferred for reprinting here. Mr. Marquis's story of the "baste more intellictual than the elephant" applies the processes of his peculiar humour to a mammal celebrated in literature from the earliest days of the Anglo-Saxons. But the writer of the Old English Physiologus was in deadly seriousness when he wrote of sailors anchoring their barks to the whale, mistaken for an island. Don Marquis tows the *Mayflower* to land through the friendly coöperation of Mrs. MacLirr and, for an extra fillip, creates in the tender, "hugeous baste" a suicidal jealousy! If this isn't humour gone enchantingly mad, we don't know humour when we meet it, and our appreciation of it will be a strain on somebody's affections.

In giving second place to Bill Adams's "Home Is the Sailor," Mrs. Wood praises the simplicity of the telling, so free from standardized tricks, and the triumph of character painting. The chairman selected the story as the best published by the *Blue Book* for the year.

In assigning third place to "Lightning," Professor Baker comments that it has the combination of strength and psychological subtlety which we have come to expect from Steele. "I'm not sure whether he intends that the twins had exchanged characters, or whether the one who tells the story is not assuming his brother's name to protect the brother. And—what was the crime for which they were hunted?" The chairman calls attention to "Satan Am a Snake," by Wilbur Daniel Steele, the publication of which (in *Harper's*, August) was only just too late to be considered by the judges. Its jungle passions, girl-into-snake Dukey, and her conqueror-deliverer warrant a long, quivering thrill, and stir dormant recollections of Elsie Venner.

"Prohibition," by the author of the prize-winning "Grandmothers," presents life at its lowest terms in the old sot whose horrendous spreeds demoralized his wife, wrecked his home, and became object of his sons' emulation. Only the extremity of his vice redeemed the wreckage and changed loss to gain. Ironically and tersely the author snaps to the close in the unforgettable picture that shows prohibition working sweetly and admirably in Old Riley's favour.

"Episode in a Machine Age" ranks fourth with one judge, who thinks it not only a good story but "a keen commentary on certain states of social psychology." The chairman trusts that its inclusion here, with the whale extravaganza and Nunnally Johnson's "The Actor," will relieve the volume from the charge made in previous years, not without foundation, that the collection is too serious. Humour has been hard to find, scintillant for a moment in the graver tale, or rampant in horseplay of wood-pulp non-literature; it now appears to be more abundantly renescent. Nunnally Johnson's "The Actor" is more than actor: he is the "you" of Professor Pattee's conclusion (see below), the you who believe that if you are a star in your own constellation, you are a star for all—effulgent in the heavens, visible from all points of the globe.

It was about time a humorist dealt with this particular superiority complex; but even a humorist may be saddened by an inevitable bobbing-up suspicion that every "you" will get the story without its broader application.

"The Man Who Caught the Weather" was selected for its novel simplicity of theme and for its gracious mood held so easily throughout. The devotion of Mr. Parline works to a fit climax, beyond which is the emotional climax of the final plangent lines. It is not surprising to hear that Mrs. Aldrich's story has been bought for reprint in England, where the exquisite shadings of her style will be appreciated as by discerning readers at home.

"Mr. Smith," by an editor of *Harper's*, was published in *Liberty*, May 5, under the title "Two Minutes to Live." It is ranked third by Professor Pattee and is recommended by the chairman for suspense and its new twist to the story turning on identity of name. The subtle clue in the title preferred by the author is in keeping with his restrained art, which reserves the dramatic two minutes for the point of climax. For the advertising shout, "Two Minutes to Live" is, admittedly, more clamant.

"An Episode at Pintail Lake," by the author of the 1922 prize-winning story, was selected by the editor of *Hearst's International and Cosmopolitan* as the best story published by that magazine in the year 1927. The O. Henry Memorial Committee believe it stands foremost in the impressive list of Mr. Cobb's recent fiction, and congratulate him on a tale of crime second only to "The Belled Buzzard" and "Snake Doctor." "The Law Beaters," also by a former prize winner, satirizes the criminal and does so the more powerfully through an unforeseen terminal shock. These tales by Cobb and Connell, with Rupert Hughes's "Going for a Ride" (*Hearst's International and Cosmopolitan*, August), should be distributed as educational tracts, literature of non-escape, however remote the doctrinal intention of their authors.

"Soldier, Sleep,"* by Peter B. Kyne (*Collier's*, October 1, 1927), is Professor Pattee's second choice, as a matter of

*Foreign rights of reprint were not obtainable, and the story is omitted with regret.

course from standards he set forth. These are worth repeating as those of an expert in the field of the short story, a foremost critic of American letters. "The twenty stories," writes Professor Pattee, "present a perplexing problem. Their variety is surprising. It is like asking one to pick out the best dog from a collection of poodles, hounds, Skyes, St. Bernards, pugs, and police dogs. If they were all bull terriers I could grade by points and present a scientific report. As it is I have had to ask myself the question: What qualities in general must a short story possess to make it worthy of being held up as the best story produced in all the United States during a whole year?"

"To be worthy of such distinction the story must be a consummate piece of art and it must be a thing of dignity and seriousness. It must be grounded in the fundamental and the universal and it must be true in the broadest sense of the word. Moreover, it must have story-telling power, the ability to carry the reader inevitably to the end, and at the end it must leave the reader with quickened imagination compelled to carry on the tale even after the ending sentence. Clearness it must have, distinction of phrase, and, so far as possible, inevitableness of diction. I am old-fashioned enough still to demand style as a component part, careful finish, beauty of texture. I rule into the second class most stories dealing with the mechanics of crime detection; I consider as inferior the story that thinly veils a pleaded-for cause or propaganda of any variety; and I rule into lowest place the vaudeville story of the slap-stick variety so common at the present time. My leading story of the year must have character delineation; it must reveal individuals and not types, but in it there must be more than mere character study. Otherwise it is not a short story but a sketch. There must be struggle, crisis, a parting of the ways, stress, strain, and possible fracture along some seam of weakness that all of us possibly may have or successful resistance because of unsuspected forces within. And the story when it is finished might be given the title 'You': it has been created from the stuff universal." In giving first place to "River Witch" and second place to "Soldier, Sleep," Professor Pattee adds that they are far from masterpieces but

in his estimation the best in the group of twenty pieces furnished him.

If one quality more than another dominates the stories in this volume, it is satire. "The Parrot" satirizes the operation of justice in Russia; "Hot Copy," the methods of reporters; "Episode in a Machine Age," our own age; "The Law Beaters," the criminal; "The Actor," the well-known artistic ego; "O'Meara" pokes incidental fun at the Puritans. The stories are chiefly of the present—whether of Russia or Florida or New York; and their authors are amazingly aware of the forces that rock or rule the present—forces atavistic, forces educated—working complexly through modern stuff to revolution or to greater permanence of established social orders.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

With this volume the O. Henry Memorial Committee of Award completes the work of a decade. Since December, 1918, when the Memorial was proposed and its exact nature determined, \$8,700 has been distributed in prizes to the authors named below.

First Prize Winners: \$500 Second Prize Winners: \$250 Special Prize Winners: \$100

1919: Margaret Prescott Montague	Wilbur Daniel Steele	—
1920: Maxwell Struthers Burt	Frances Noyes Hart	—
1921: Edison Marshall	Charles Tenney Jackson	—
1922: Irvin S. Cobb	Rose Wilder Lane	F. R. Buckley
1923: Edgar Valentine Smith	Richard Connell	Elizabeth Irons Folsom
1924: Inez Haynes Irwin	Chester T. Crowell	Frances Newman
1925: Julian Street	Wythe Williams	Mary Austin
1926: Wilbur Daniel Steele	Sherwood Anderson	A. R. Wetjen
1927: Roark Bradford	Ernest Hemingway	Louis Bromfield
1928: Walter Duranty	Marjory Stoneman Douglas	Zona Gale

Special Prize Winner, 1921: General Excellence in the short story for the years 1919, 1920, 1921, Wilbur Daniel Steele, \$500.

Stories by Wilbur Daniel Steele have been reprinted in seven volumes. The following authors are represented in three volumes: Ada Jack Carver, Richard Connell, Samuel Derieux, O. F. Lewis, Booth Tarkington. The following, in two volumes: Bill Adams, Sherwood Anderson, Thomas Beer, Roark Brad-

ford, Irvin S. Cobb, Charles Caldwell Dobie, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Lee Foster Hartman, Charles Tenney Jackson, Eleanor Mercein Kelly, Edison Marshall, Gouverneur Morris, L. H. Robbins, Edgar Valentine Smith, Albert Payson Terhune, Mary Heaton Vorse, Ben Ames Williams. Many other story writers of America have been represented at least once; for example, Fannie Hurst, Edna Ferber, James Branch Cabell, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Alice Duer Miller, Lawrence Perry, Gordon Arthur Smith, Stephen French Whitman, Courtney Ryley Cooper, Mildred Cram, Sophie Kerr, Ethel Watts Mumford, Tristram Tupper, Richmond Brooks Barrett, Helen R. Hull, James Hopper, Grace Sartwell Mason, Mary Synon, Jesse Lynch Williams, Stephen Vincent Benét, Elsie Singmaster, Raymond S. Spears, Francis Hackett, DuBose Heyward, Brand Whitlock, Katharine Brush, Alma and Paul Ellerbe, Ruth Sawyer, Ruth Suckow, and Nunnally Johnson. Besides these, whose names are known to every reader of stories, a number of lesser writers who have achieved one or more distinctive pieces have been included.

In these ten years growth and change are obvious, even from a survey point near the close of the decade. A few of the old guard have maintained high quality and, by extending their work into new fields, have proved the mastership through prolificness that results from energy long sustained. Many new writers have thrust themselves above the horizon; some shine faintly in the east, others have risen to the zenith of evanescent fame and high prices. New magazines come, and, sometimes, go; but the long-established classics remain. Stories keep pace with life, in the way of journalism: woman in politics, airplane adventures, bootleggers, and hi-jackers, the Great War—tales of these, impossible through conditions ten years ago, now strut the fringes of the stage and frequently its centre. Old themes are renascent: in the opinion of the conservative, not since the Elizabethans has sex been exploited so frankly, perhaps so shamelessly. The detective story has returned in great numbers, and with it the story of crime as crime has not existed before the second quarter of the Twentieth Century. Polyglot America has developed writers whose antecedents hail from all quarters of the earth; but the Negro, longest naturalized, the race which two generations ago read little

and wrote nothing, probably is the greatest phenomenon in the world of art to-day. In drama, music, and the short story he has spokesmen who interpret the race as it never has been interpreted. Craftsmanship in writing advances with the machine age. Inhabitants of America, by a large majority, prefer the padded comfort of Grand Rapids furniture to the patina of renaissance Italian or early American maple; they demand stories made to order, polished, conventional, and a lot of them. The minority, opposing what is, seeking in the novel or the antique something different, eagerly follows the struggle of the rebels to destroy standardization.

BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS.

*O. HENRY MEMORIAL
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THE PARROT

By WALTER DURANTY

From Red Book

THE box car rattled and swayed as the train jerked slowly out of the station, but the big sergeant standing at the open door balanced himself easily in his thick felt boots.

He held Sergey McTavish by the collar of his astrakhan tunic and the seat of his breeches, kicking and wriggling like a retriever pup. Then he swung the boy up level with his shoulder and threw him sprawling on a snowdrift.

"There," he said, "you young devil, that will teach you to steal potatoes from the army and sell them to dirty food speculators. You have the red head of an imp from hell and the black heart of a capitalist. We have done with you."

So ended the six months' career of Sergey McTavish as mascot of the Seventh Battalion of Red Army Riflemen.

During those months he had tasted victory—in the swift advance to the gates of Warsaw—and defeat—in the hungry flight back across the frontier; he had come to swear like a Russian soldier—who swears with strength and zest; and he had looted gloriously—the astrakhan cloak on which the battalion tailor had worked all night, jolting cross-legged in a mule cart, to make round cap, tunic, and breeches. But he had not learned discipline or honesty, neither overcurrent in the Red Army of those days; and so here he was, gasping for breath on a snowdrift in the outskirts of a little town in the Ural foothills, while his late comrades jogged heedlessly on to their garrison at Ekaterinburg.

When he got his breath back, Sergey scrambled to his feet and turned to curse the big sergeant as worst he knew how. But the tail of the train was blank and black in the December twilight, growing smaller every second, too small to be worth

cursing. In the jargon of the Red Army, the episode was "liquidated."

Sergey Sergeyitch McTavish, twelve-year-old orphan, son of a Scottish soldier of fortune and a German farmer's daughter from the old Volga "colonies," was alone, friendless, penniless, and hungry in a wind-swept freight yard, with nothing in sight but the meagre huts of the station and rows of roofless cars whose broken sides stuck out like jagged teeth. Sergey regretted now that he had been so smart and witty a few hours before at the expense of the station commandant, a thick-headed Lett. His comrades on the train had roared with laughter and kept off the angry Lett when Sergey dived among them for refuge. The light in the station hut meant warmth and food now, but Letts are a stubborn and unfor-giving people. No, there was nothing for it but to tramp the three miles back to that dismal town.

Damn potatoes anyway, and speculators! If they had only left him the money! That brute of a sergeant had grabbed every kopeck. Still, he was lucky, at that; they might have beaten him or marooned him naked on the open steppe.

But a veteran of the Polish war knows worse things than hunger or cold or darkness. The boy dragged his cap down over his ears and set off across the rusty tracks toward the town.

As he crept under the second of three lines of dismantled freight cars, his nose caught full blast the smell of cooking food. Right before him in the third row one car was intact, light shining behind the little window in the door, and smoke pouring from the stovepipe at the roof corner.

Without hesitation Sergey banged his fist upon the door. It slid open immediately, and a girl looked down at him.

"Come in, stranger," she cried. "We were expecting you. But tell me quickly, is it to heaven or to hell that we owe the pleasure of your visit?"

"He who sent me here said I had the red head of an imp from hell," replied Sergey, swinging up by her outstretched hand and slamming the door behind him. "So you can understand I find it cold here, and am hungry after my journey."

The girl brushed off his cap and pulled him forward under the kerosene lamp which hung from the middle of the roof.

"Red as hell's flames," she muttered admiringly. "That

should keep you warm, and we will fill your belly. My father, here, just said it would take a saint or a devil to conquer my problem, and I told him as you knocked, that even St. Nicholas the Wonder-worker would never dare risk his wings in Russia to-day."

A roar of laughter from a heap of straw in the corner near the stove: "'Tis but a little imp for so great a task, Marfoosha, and I doubt if the Prince of Devils himself is a match for the Baba Papagai, who beyond doubt is his own grandmother." The voice shook a trifle over the last words, and Sergey glimpsed fingers gesturing quickly over a broad khaki chest.

There were three people in the car, the girl, comely and slim with a tangle of blonde hair, red shirt tucked into short blue kilt, and high black leather boots; the man, in khaki uniform, lying on the straw, fat brown cheeks, quick little black eyes in a bush of iron-gray hair and whiskers; and a small bent figure by the stove, so wrapped in a service overcoat of the old Imperial army that nothing was visible but a white wisp of beard, a bald shining pate, and two pink pointed ears.

"Comrade imp," said the girl, "I present my grandfather, who lives alone in this car, being wise and having money, but not wise enough to help me in my trouble; and my father, who is commandant of the prison but unable to save my lover, his prisoner, from——"

"Don't forget to present Comrade Soup also," broke in the old man with a chuckle, "and little Comrade Vodka in his bottle, who is best of all." And, plunging an iron ladle into the steaming pot, he filled an earthen bowl and passed it to the hungry boy.

Twice Sergey emptied the bowl, breaking chunks of black bread into the hot liquid. Then he gulped a stinging mouthful of spirit from the bottle, and taking a palmful of green flake *mahorka*, and a scrap of newspaper from the old man, twisted the cone-shaped cigarette of the Russian soldier, lighted the upturned flap with a sulphur match, and putting the small end of the cone between his lips, puffed out a cloud of evil-smelling smoke.

"What is this trouble you speak of," he asked, "and who is the Parrot Woman, the Baba Papagai?"

All three of his hosts spoke at once, in noisy excitement.

There was a young man, a foreigner, a prisoner, an American, a soldier, who had come somehow from somewhere eastward on a train, young and cheerful and clever with his hands beyond belief; and the girl Marfoosha loved him, and he had mended the electric light for the prison and later for the whole town, and at first he was quite dumb like a beast, but now he spoke humanly enough after several months; and two weeks ago the Soviet had agreed to let Marfoosha marry him, because they wanted to keep him in the town to start again the nail factory, as he had promised, and because he was cheerful and had blue eyes and brown curly hair, and Marfoosha loved him and wanted to marry him terribly, and would die too if he were killed.

This Sergey learned first, because the girl talked fastest and loudest, but through it all beat like the drum in a regimental band the name of the Parrot Woman, Baba Papagai, who was a witch and a demon and the grandmother of all the devils. Bit by bit the boy got clear about her also and linked her up with Marfoosha and the American prisoner.

She had a familiar spirit; this terrible woman, a parrot, red and gray, in a wire cage; and when it bit you, you were guilty; and when it didn't, you were innocent; but it always bit you, and so you were always shot.

Nobody knew where she came from, but it was said she was the widow of a famous revolutionary who had worked in a factory at Ekaterinburg and had been shot by the Czar's army in 1906. And now she was president of a "Flying Tribunal," that moved about the whole province judging counter revolutionaries; and always she made them put a finger in the parrot's cage, and always it bit them, and then they were shot. And it was reported that she lived on the smell of blood and must kill a man every day or she would die, and the devil, her grandson, would fly off with her. And when the Soviet knew she was coming to hold court in the town they were all very frightened, because there was only one victim, the ex-manager of the factory, who twice had tried to escape from the town and had been prevented. That one man would never be enough for the Baba Papagai. She would suspect the Soviet of being lukewarm in the cause of revolution and perhaps put some of them to the trial of that horrid parrot, as had happened before elsewhere, always with fatal results.

So four days ago the Soviet had held a meeting hastily and in secret, and had decided to sacrifice their American. They were sorry, but it was his head or theirs, so no argument was possible. They'd put high hopes on his reopening the factory; but after all, he *was* a stranger, and a prisoner, and it was said the Americans were fighting to help the counter revolution, and it was he or they, and finally there was just a chance that the parrot wouldn't like the taste of foreigners and fail to bite him.

Marfoosha and her father, who, as prison commandant, felt most uneasy about the whole affair, had come to ask the advice of the hermit in the box car. But he had been of no help to them, and the father had said it would take an angel or a devil to find the way out of the mess, and just at that second Sergey had knocked and said at once he was an imp from hell, so what would he suggest?

Sergey's Scotch blood whispered caution. He puffed his *mahorka* cigarette and declared profoundly that there was a solution for every problem, but this case being extremely difficult he had better set eyes first on the woman and her parrot, to say nothing of the American and the ex-manager of the factory, before deciding what should be done. There was a twinkle in Marfoosha's eye as she received his verdict, and the boy was reassured as to the reality of her belief in his diabolic origin; but the prison commandant and his elderly parent were ready in approval.

"Never drive pigs too swiftly," said the ancient, banging the cork of his vodka bottle hard against the side of the car and burying it in the recesses of his greatcoat. "Let our Comrade Imp view the situation for himself, and maybe he will be able to make a plan. For me, I am at a loss—I admit it freely; the young man must die: there is no doubt of it."

"Everyone must die some day," replied his son, "and I, as commandant of a prison, know that some die quicker than others. But this American is a friendly youth, and clever with his hands, and Marfoosha loves him dearly; so I want his life saved and no trouble with this infernal old woman. If the flame-headed Imp can help us, I, Alexei Petrovich, promise that he shall have all the food he needs in this cold country, and a warm corner by my fire to toast his toes till they are red as his hair."

All of which sounded good to Sergey McTavish as he said good-bye to the old man and accompanied Marfoosha and her father across the cold white plain to the little town.

Far off, beneath the low roofs, windows poured a flood of light upon the snow.

"What makes your town so bright?" asked Sergey, tramping a little ahead of Marfoosha, step for step with the long strides of her father.

"I told you the American fixed our electric machines for us," said the prison warden. "I guess you are surprised to see one of our towns using electricity these days."

He emphasized the word "our" with a faintly sneering accent. It is a habit the Russians have, to deprecate everything Russian.

"And now," he went on mournfully, "even this town won't have any electricity any more. When he's gone, the whole works will be *kaput* in no time. Oh, that Baba Papagai and her parrot! To think that a miserable bird could bring such trouble upon us!"

"You say it's a bird?" asked Sergey, who had never seen a parrot and had not the least idea whether it was bird or beast or perhaps a new kind of Soviet commissar. "Well, if it's only a bird that's worrying you, why don't you kill it?"

"Kill it!" almost shouted Marfoosha. "Why, you might as well talk of killing Lenin!"

"*Shh!*" cried her father sharply. "You mustn't talk like that!" He caught Sergey by the shoulder. "See here, little comrade, you don't understand. It's not a bird, really; it only *looks* like a bird. But it talks like a man, and it tells her, the Baba, what she must do. Who shall say which is the master, the parrot or the parrot woman? Everyone knows there are things like that which come out of the dark to serve those who sell their souls to Darkness. You can't kill them, ever, the dark spirits, but in the old days a priest could drive them away with the name of God and holy water. And now the priests are spat upon and hide in holes, and God has turned His face from our Russia, which is become a plaything for the evil ones." His voice sank into a whimper and he crossed himself with bowed head. The girl stood motionless, but her breath came in short gasps as if she had been running.

Sergey McTavish shivered. This was ill talk, of spirits from

the dark, and the man's fear was infectious. But he bit tight on the life rule which had steeled him and his father and his father's father who died to check Osman Digna's last sortie from Plevna—"No Scot can show fear before a Russian."

"That is stuff for women and children," he said stoutly; "but we men of the Red Army care neither for gods nor devils; and besides, why worry about the ford till you come to the river?"

His companions made no answer, and all three trudged on in silence through the snow.

The prison was a large house set back among tall trees whose branches hung glittering inch thick with frost in the light of an electric arc lamp. A sentry bundled to the ears in bearskin coat peered at them through the rime of his collar, then stood aside with a thump of his bayonetted gun upon the doorstep.

In the high, square entrance hall two men were sitting before a huge fireplace, ablaze with round birch logs thick as a man's body. The younger leaped up as they entered, tall and loose limbed, in a uniform of dark mustard colour such as Sergey had never seen. In two strides, so it seemed, he was across the room, lifting Marfoosha right off her feet into his arms.

There was more delight than anger in her squeal of protest. Sergey stood watching, round-eyed, while the girl's father walked forward to join the other man, beside the fire.

"Enough, Mahlinkie, enough," cried Marfoosha in a stifled voice. "Put me down—we have a visitor, bad-mannered one!"

Regaining her feet, she flung her arm round Sergey's shoulder. "This is my American, little comrade; his name is Djim, but that is a dog's name, not a man's, so I call him Mahlinkie, the little one, because he is so tall." She laughed gaily and pushed the boy forward, pulling off his hat with her other hand. "Look, Mahlinkie, it's fire, but it doesn't burn." And she ran her fingers through Sergey's flaming hair.

"Fortheluvamike!"

Sergey McTavish did not understand this American greeting, but something within him called forth two half-forgotten words in reply. "Scottish, gorrd-am-you-sirr."

The effect was startling. High in the air went Sergey in those strong young arms, while a torrent of unfamiliar words

beat upon his ears. What a din they made! Sergey, six feet from the ground, beside himself with excitement, yelling his new-found slogan; the American shouting strange noises, and Marfoosha dancing around them, half in laughter, half in tears.

The prison warden and his friend by the fire rushed forward in panic. "Are you mad?" cried the former, catching his daughter around the waist. "Stop this uproar. You don't know what's happened. She is here already, staying in Petrushka's house."

Marfoosha halted as if struck by lightning, and the American stiffened, holding Sergey in midair.

Slowly he lowered the boy to the ground, still grasping him firmly under the arms. An instant's silence; then the warden continued: "She came to-night, with her parrot—saints defend us—and holds court to-morrow. Very angry when she heard there were only two cases. She will judge the factory manager in the morning; and the next day"—he jerked his thumb toward the American—"it's his turn. They say we are lucky. He's a foreigner—she was quite interested and said no more about our scarcity of prisoners."

There was no answer to these words save a low sound from Marfoosha. She had fainted.

Sergey McTavish awoke next morning from a tormenting dream of gray devil birds with red tails pecking at his breast, to find Marfoosha and her American standing beside the bench on which he had passed the night before the fire.

The girl's face was red and swollen with weeping, but her lover wore a friendly grin.

"Wake up, little comrade, wake up and eat your breakfast, for there's work for you to do." She had tried to speak cheerfully, but as Sergey rubbed his eyes she sank down in a heap beside the bench, sobbing desperately.

The tall American tried vainly to comfort her: "Marfoosha, my darling, my baby girl, don't worry."

Sergey McTavish sat upright. How stupid girls were not to understand that death was part of a soldier's job! He pulled Marfoosha's hair sharply. "Stop crying," he said, "and tell me what's the matter."

Marfoosha shook herself free. "All right," she said to her lover, "but you go and let me talk to him alone."

And then to Sergey: "The Baba Papagai is in a frightful humour. We know it from Petrushka. She had her parrot at breakfast with her, early, two hours ago, before it was light, and sat there talking, talking. She said to him, '*Belogvardeyetz*'" (White Guard) "and the parrot answered '*Belogvardeyetz*,' and then the Baba Papagai laughed and the parrot said over and over again, '*Belogvardeyetz*,' and the Baba Papagai laughed some more.

"You, Sergey Sergeyitch, do you know what that means?" Marfoosha leaned across the bench and laid her clenched fists close to Sergey's heart.

"No," said Sergey uneasily, with a spoonful of *kasha* poised halfway to his lips.

"Death! That's all! Just death for my American!" Marfoosha laid her head on her arms, then straightened up and rattled on breathlessly:

"The court opens at ten o'clock. You go there. It will be just a general rehearsal. The Baba Papagai is having her rehearsal this morning. The real show is when my American comes before her." Marfoosha's voice faltered. Sergey again stopped eating.

"She knows it. She told Petrushka she had heard of this American in town. She said she had never before had the chance to try her *papagai* on an American. She cursed America. She said it was the sink of all iniquity, a den of wolves, the castle of capitalism. She said that all Americans were White Guards, and when she said 'American' to her parrot this morning, it just answered, '*Belogvardeyetz*.'

"Sergey, go see for yourself."

Sergey put the half-empty *kasha* bowl on the floor. He had lost his appetite. It was clear to him that Marfoosha was all wrought up about this business, but, hoping against despair, somehow looked to him to help her.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"Near ten," answered Marfoosha. "Come with me—I'll show you the way."

Outside, the sun was rising red through the mist over the blank white steppe.

Ten minutes from her home Marfoosha stopped, took Sergey by the arm, and pointed straight ahead.

"There it is," she said.

"What, the church?" asked Sergey.

"It used to be the church. Don't you see the guard in front? Now go, please, and come to us as soon as it is over." Marfoosha took Sergey's head in her arms, pressed it to her heart until he struggled to get free, then released him with a push and, turning swiftly, ran back the way they had come.

Sergey McTavish recovered his balance, frowned a moment at the retreating figure, then proceeded warily toward the church. There was nothing strange to him about a Cheka trial taking place there. Even when other buildings were available, the "Flying Tribunals of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combatting Counter Revolutions" had found that their sessions made a far greater impression on their White Guard enemies if they were held in the church. It appealed, too, to the Red sense of humour.

In front of the building, beneath an ikon of the Virgin Mary, a Red Guard paced up and down, his conical cap pulled tight over his ears to meet the threadbare collar of an old gray overcoat. The buttons, cut off because they had borne the insignia of the Czar, were replaced with string. When Sergey approached, the Red Guard dropped the butt of his rifle nonchalantly in the snow, crying:

"What do you want, little princeling?" with an ironic wink at the boy's astrakhan suit.

"Don't call me names, comrade," grinned back Sergey. "I'm Red Army too. This is loot from the Polaks, issued me by the regimental tailor, Seventh Battalion Rifles. Just lost touch with headquarters. Now be a good comrade and give me a cigarette and let me go inside and get warm a bit."

The sentry laughed, said he'd no tobacco, but obligingly turned his back while Sergey slipped past into the church.

For a moment he could see nothing in the dim interior save two tall candles on the altar, above which an ikon glittered with gold and jewels.

Very quietly he groped his way forward to the last of a number of rough wooden benches which had been placed in the nave, and sat down behind rows of people bent forward in eager attention. At the other end of the church a man was speaking in a high-pitched voice, trailing off at times into falsetto. The words came rapidly, tumbling over one another, hardly intelligible. Sergey could only catch a phrase now and

then—"never . . . Czar's government . . . always tried to work for the people . . . worker myself . . . not my fault . . . education . . . no counter revolutionary, believe me, believe me, believe me."

Cutting this babble like a saw, another voice, metallic, harsh, rasped a single word: "*Belogvardeyetz!*" ("White Guard!")

Then a loud laugh. Then silence.

Sergey's eyes, by now accustomed to the semidarkness, sought the source of the inhuman voice. With a shiver of interest he realized the word "*Belogvardeyetz!*" had come from a cage swinging beneath a stiff gold embroidery attached like a banner to a pole, which stood at the left of the altar. Within the cage, a gray-red bird moved listlessly on its perch. That was the bird that talked like a man, but who had laughed?

Near the altar a woman was rising to her feet behind a table draped with red cloth. Erect, she loomed enormous, six feet or more in height. Traces of mocking laughter were still about her lips, but her eyes bore no sign of it. The flickering light gleamed on abnormally protruding eyeballs, threw into relief a network of swollen veins on either temple, and showed her thickened throat bursting from the collar of a soldier's tunic.

Sergey felt his hands shake as they fumbled for his pockets. He needed no one to tell him this was the Baba Papagai.

With a gesture of impatience she pulled off the cap, revealing a thin growth of gray hair. The woman was nearly bald.

She turned to the left where a man was standing, thin and crumpled, between two soldiers with fixed bayonets.

"Counter revolutionary!" she bellowed suddenly. The man staggered. He moistened his lips with the end of his tongue and seemed to be trying to speak, but before the words came the Baba Papagai continued more quietly:

"I know what you want to say, citizen. You never carried on counter revolution. You never harmed or oppressed anyone, never resisted the proletariat; in fact, you admire the revolution intensely and think Lenin and Trotzky the greatest men in history. Yes, I know all that; I've heard the same story before, often." Her voice deepened and again became harsh. She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and resumed: "Fortunately, fortunately, we have here with us

the means of seeing beneath these fine words, right to the inner secrets of your heart. You are surprised, perhaps, that an ignorant old woman like me should see, should be able to know the secret heart of an 'intelligenter' like you; but I don't pretend so much. It is this wise bird here, who is older than I, older, it may be, than anyone in this town, who by long experience can recognize a counter revolutionary at first glance, can smell the black soul of him in one sniff."

Her voice had become monotonous, rising and falling like that of a priest reciting some familiar ritual.

"Walk forward, my friend of the people, walk forward, and put your finger into the cage of my little comrade, that he may take a sniff at it. Perhaps you are innocent, as you would have us believe. The little comrade will know, because he never makes a mistake. If you are innocent he will do you no harm, will not touch your finger; but if your hand has offended against the People"—again that inhuman roar—"he will bite it to the bone, and after my judgment you shall receive your punishment."

She made a sign to the soldiers, who took the cringing man by the arms and dragged him toward the parrot's cage. The man shrank within his coat as if wishing to wither up and slip out of his clothes, leaving them in the hands of his guards. They grasped him more firmly and urged him forward. The candlelight glanced from their bayonets and played across the bulging eyes of the Baba Papagai as she mockingly reassured the terror-stricken figure in their hands.

"Have no fear, little servant of dogs. That bird is a proletarian. You said you loved the workers. If it's true, the *papagai* will never touch you. Nor will I."

There was no sound save the prisoner's feet dragging across the floor as the soldiers carried him to the last instance of justice. He had slumped down in their arms so that when they reached the foot of the golden banner, his head fell in the shadow cast by the bottom of the cage. In the attempt to raise him upright, the guards brought his forehead heavily against it. The impact shook the parrot. It ruffled its feathers, stretched its wings, brought them tightly back against its body and hopped expectantly forward on its perch. Its indifference was gone; its beady eyes were watchful.

A murmur of awe, or wonderment, or horror, floated from the shadowy figures which filled the benches. It was cut short by the voice of the Baba Papagai.

"Carry out the procedure, Soldiers of the Revolution. If the servant of dogs cannot lift his hand, lift it for him."

The prisoner struggled. One of the soldiers deftly twisted the left arm of the writhing man behind his back and pushed it upward until he gasped: "I'll do it." The soldier released the pressure on the twisted arm and the prisoner stood upright. He lifted his right hand with extended forefinger and thrust it forward by short jerks. Twice he dropped his hand, and twice the soldier pressed the hammer lock until he gasped again: "I'll do it."

The third time, his finger reached the cage. It trembled so that he was unable to poke it through the bars. The other guard grasped it firmly and pushed it into the cage. For a moment there was utter stillness in the church. The prisoner had raised his head and was staring with fascinated eyes at the parrot. He watched the bird as though the finger in the cage were another man's.

The parrot eyed the prisoner's hand. Cocking its head on one side, it cast its beady gaze appraisingly at the forefinger that shook as though playfully just below its beak. Its claws against the perch made a faint scratching sound which seemed to reverberate in the silence. A peasant seated on the front bench crossed himself mechanically.

The parrot bent its neck, and—rubbed its beak on the perch. Sergey almost laughed. Then he caught the first expulsion of breath, half choked and gasped, as he saw the parrot lunge swiftly, take the finger with a snapping motion in its beak, and bite downward.

More shocking than any scream was the silence of the prisoner. The parrot had bitten him to the bone. He behaved as though he had not felt it. Such a relief, this stab of pain, from the slow torture of suspense, so welcome the knowledge of his doom after its uncertainty, that the bird's bite, though meaning death, was like a douche of cold water, reviving his manhood.

"*Belogvardeyetz!*" croaked the parrot, back on its perch with one strong wing beat.

"He never makes a mistake," exclaimed the Baba Papagai, and gabbled formally: "Citizen Nikitin, this court finds you guilty of counter revolution."

"Take him out!" she shouted. "To the cellar with the White Guard servant of dogs!"

The prisoner was the calmest man in the church. Erect, his head back, with a firm step he allowed his guards to lead him across the front of the altar toward the rear entrance. As he passed the table of the Baba Papagai, she leaned forward and feasted her bulging eyes on his drawn white face. The prisoner looked her back squarely, sneering as though in sympathy with the snarl on her face, and with a contemptuous cry, "Parrot justice!" yielded to the urging of his guards as they dragged him through the door.

The Baba Papagai put on the cloth cap. Her upper lip clamped down in savage determination. "To-night, at eleven o'clock, we'll hear the next case on the docket." She gathered up her papers, shoved the table aside, and strode down the aisle.

Court was adjourned.

Sergey had intended to slip out before the others, but he had not reckoned with this abrupt ending of the session. Before he could move, the Baba Papagai was in the aisle, scrutinizing the faces as she passed. With every step she took, his courage waned. By the time she reached his bench, he was huddled cowering in his seat. He felt numb, in the clutch of a nightmare. Those eyes were the eyes of a Kelpie, that monster from the stories of Scotland his father had told him long ago, half bull, half demon, but shaped like a man, which dwelt at the bottom of the deep lochs of the Highlands and on nights when the full moon shone, appeared beside the skiffs of unwary boatmen and dragged them down to death. The Kelpie, he recollected shudderingly, had just such bulging eyes, such shaggy eyebrows, such lineaments of hate.

Never before had Sergey known such anguish as when the Baba Papagai stopped beside him, turned and surveyed the church to satisfy herself no one had moved since she left her table, then, quite accidentally, let fall her gaze on his small red head.

The Baba Papagai apparently felt the need to emphasize her exit.

"Well, who are you, with your head of an imp from hell?" boomed the cruel voice.

This repetition of the phrase so fresh in his memory broke the spell sufficiently for him to stammer out: "I'm only a little boy."

"Whelp!" spat the Baba Papagai, and passed on through the door.

Sergey waited motionless until nearly everyone had left the building.

Running back to the prison as fast as he could, Sergey felt the movement of his legs in the sharp air send the blood tingling through his veins, and by the time he reached the house and paused to scrape the snow from his boots, he had shaken off his fears. He felt big with importance as he entered the hall and knew that he had news to tell. Marfoosha's face brought back the unaccustomed sense of depression. She was sitting at the table between her father and the American soldier, her head sunk on her breast.

The two men looked up eagerly when Sergey appeared, but Marfoosha never stirred.

"Well, what happened?" cried the commandant.

"It bit, all right," announced Sergey in a matter-of-fact tone.

The prison warden shoved his glass away from him, banged his fist on the table: "I knew it."

Marfoosha lifted her head as if just awakened. Catching Sergey by the arm, she drew him to her and whispered: "Tell us about it. All about it."

Sergey began. They listened as though their lives depended upon every word.

"And then," he went on, "she said she would hold court again to-night."

"To-night?" all three broke out. "To-night? It was to be to-morrow."

"You mean," gasped Marfoosha, "that—that—he is to be tried to-night?"

"That's what she said," responded Sergey.

Marfoosha threw herself on the floor, clasping her lover round the knees. "They shan't. They shan't!" she screamed.

His face was white and his lip trembled a little as he patted her head, repeating tenderly: "*Nichevo, nichevo, nich-*

evo." It was the only Russian word he could pronounce without a trace of accent, the universal "Never mind" or "What's the use?" of Slavic fatalism.

But his caressing hand froze when the commandant mumbled thickly: "They shoot you through the back of the head."

Marfoosha sobbed aloud.

"Yes, that's how they do it," insisted her father, tipsy with indignation. "They take you down to the cellar of the church and just as you pass the threshold they shoot you in the back of the head. They think you won't expect it and won't turn around, and that it's the easiest way to get it over. But lots do know. The dirty swine!"

A moan from his daughter checked him suddenly, diverting his anger: "And you! You damped imp!" he yelled at Sergey. "What are you going to do? I thought you could find something?"

Marfoosha's weary, "Let him alone," roused her father to a higher pitch.

"No, I won't let him alone. What good has he done? You damned imp! It was Dédushka who swore you amounted to something. The old man is getting crazier every day. Suppose you get along over there and let him know how worthless you are. Get on. Get out of here." Unable to vent his feelings otherwise, the commandant staggered to his feet and advanced with threatening fist toward the boy.

Sergey retreated sullenly. He was halfway down the steps when the commandant rushed out and yelled at him: "What time will it be?"

"Eleven o'clock to-night," shouted the boy without pausing.

It was already past five o'clock and pitch dark. He found his way through the town by the glow from the windows and afterward by instinct, like a young wild animal, accurately retraced the path of the evening before. His thoughts were whirling about the awful eyes of the Baba Papagai. The longer he thought, the more convinced he became that she was a Kelpie. His father's stories came back more vividly. Surely there was some detail he had forgotten. Yes, something about a charm or talisman against the monster. His father certainly had spoken of a charm. But that was all so long ago. To Sergey a whole lifetime seemed passed since then, and he

groped back in his memory as an old man strives to recall his youth. He tried to concentrate his mind on the talisman, but each time it slipped away from him. "Like a watermelon seed slipping through your fingers," thought Sergey.

The simile struck a vein of association. The talisman was some kind of seed. His boots brushed against the branches of a fir tree growing beside the railroad track. Sergey felt as though a door in his mind had opened halfway.

"Tree berries! The berries of the mountain ash! That's what Father said was good for Kelpies. Woven in a cross."

But something else, too, when there were no ash berries. Something still better, he reflected. The feeling that the door was only halfway open persisted. He was walking head down, so absorbed in the effort to remember that he went past the old man's box car without noticing it. Suddenly he stopped, sniffed the air like a hound on the trail, turned, saw the box car, and ran toward it. He continued to sniff as he banged on the door, stamping impatiently until it opened with a puff of savoury steam.

"I've found it!" shouted Sergey, leaping up and seizing the astonished old man by the hand. "I've found it!" he repeated, dancing in excitement. "We can save him now."

"In the name of the holy saints Boris and Gleb!" ejaculated the grandfather. "What is it you've found to make you jump like a flea on a frog's back?"

Sergey hardly heard him. His eyes were roving round the cabin.

"Ha! There, in the corner!" He heaved a deep sigh of relief. "The charm!" he exclaimed. "The charm, little grandfather, the charm to defeat the Kelpie."

"And now perhaps you'll tell me what a Kelpie is and why you're behaving like an idiot," grunted the old man sarcastically as he dipped a bowl of stew and placed it smoking hot before the boy. How good it smelled! Sergey recollected his stomach so keenly that he forgot his excitement. Over the stew he related the day's events, dwelling on his conviction that the Baba Papagai was a Kelpie.

"Very probable. Very probable." The old man nodded affirmatively and looked with as much wonder as old age can feel at the red head of his small visitor bobbing up and down over the bowl.

"Whew, I'm late, terribly late. Maybe he's already gone. Must run like the devil."

Sergey jumped for the door, pulling his fur cap over his ears, and with a shrill "Good-bye!" bolted into the night.

He took the steps at the prison door in one jump, landed on his heels, skidded, and fell in a heap at the feet of the surprised sentry.

"Gangway!" he gasped. "Lemme in."

"Who, then, is holding you?" said the sentry as Sergey jerked open the door and rushed into the hall.

It was empty.

Sergey stooped, frozen with the fear that he had come too late to give his talisman to the American. His feet lagged as he crossed the hall, but voices in a room beyond quickened his step. He pushed his head cautiously through the door, entered quickly, closed it with a bang, and jumped forward. Marfoosha and the American were sitting on the floor, talking so earnestly that they scarcely heeded Sergey's presence. On the bed lay the prison commandant, groaning and panting. He was drunk.

Sergey brought his two hands down thwack on the backs of Marfoosha and her lover.

"Come! Quick! I've found it—the charm—to save you. Where's the kitchen? Come with me." His words brought the two instantly to their feet, and the commandant rolled his eyes, trying to get up.

"Quick, here!" Sergey grabbed the American with his right hand and was digging in his pocket with the other when the Red Guard brusquely shoved him aside with: "Out of the way now and enough of this monkey business. Can't help it. Orders is orders. Come along."

Marfoosha threw her arms around her lover's neck. The Red Guard frowned with embarrassment but paused. Sergey turned his back as though in sympathy with the feelings of the lovers, but in the moment of their embrace, he pulled from his pocket a little white object, and clenching it tightly in his fist whirled and cried:

"Well, comrade, shake hands. Come on, be a man—don't stand there and beller."

The American looked down at him, smiled, released Marfoosha and took Sergey's small paw.

"Good-bye," he said.

"A talisman. Keep it in your hand until the last minute," whispered Sergey. "It's magic. Hold it tight, dig your nails into it, and you can't lose." Then loud: "Good-bye, comrade."

The heavy door of the house clanged shut, but Marfoosha stood where they had left her. Then she sank to her knees.

"Holy St. Martha, thou who hast suffered greatly——"

The Baba Papagai believed in ceremony of a kind.

As eleven boomed from the tower the Baba Papagai's huge bulk moved down the aisle toward the altar. Behind her two soldiers, each carrying a lighted candle a yard long and thick as a man's arm. Behind them a third, holding aloft the golden banner, with the parrot's cage, wrapped in a white napkin, swinging beneath it like a censer. Then the clerk of the court with measured step. Then two guards with fixed bayonets. Then the prisoner, head high, shoulders squared, marching slow as a funeral parade. Finally, two more guards, stolid, ponderous.

The Baba Papagai strode to the table before the altar, turned, surveyed the audience, seated herself, and folded her arms. The man with the ecclesiastical banner placed it neatly in its socket and with a nervous gesture flicked off the cover from the cage. The light of the two candles fell on the parrot. It blinked, ruffled its feathers, stretched its neck and croaked: "*Gotoval*" ("Ready!")

The Baba Papagai bared her yellow fangs.

"*Gotoval* Yes, we are ready, my little dove!"

"Comrades," said the Baba Papagai, pushing back her chair, crossing her legs and shoving her cap to the back of her head, "Comrades, we are here to-night to try a foreign dog who was sent to impose the might of his capitalist masters upon the workers and peasants of the Russian Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics. He comes from the country which above all would like to see the first Workers and Peasants Government once more enslaved by tyrants. An American! It means a dog."

The word "*dog*" aroused the parrot. It squawked: "*Belog-vardeyetz!*"

The woman's maniac laugh shocked the echoes of the church.

"Never wrong! Never wrong! My little dove never mistakes

them," she cried. "Now, you dog of a White Guard, speak now for yourself. Say why you, a foreigner, dared invade our country."

The American answered boldly in his childish Russian:

"*Yah gavaryou ochen malo po Russky. No yah ne vinovat.*"

"Oh, you speak very little Russian, but you're not guilty. You know enough to say that. And you've nothing more to say?" The Baba Papagai rose to her feet, placed her cap before her on the table, and leaned forward. "Nothing more? Or have you some excuse?"

"*Nichevo*," retorted the prisoner coolly. It was the one word he pronounced perfectly in Russian.

Her face darkened with fury.

"Dog!" The word echoed to the farthest corners of the building.

Immediately the parrot responded: "*Belogvardeyetz!*"

"The little comrade has spoken. Let him judge the case."

The two guards beside the American grasped him by the arms. He needed no urging. "*Nichevo*," he said again, to tell them he was not afraid to play his part without coercion.

He walked straight up to the cage. Sergey held his breath. The boy's glance shifted rapidly from the parrot's cage to the Baba Papagai, still leaning forward on the table, her Kelpie's eyes a-goggle at her victim.

"Hell!" said the American aloud. The foreign word rang out defiantly. "Hell!" he repeated again, and stuck his forefinger into the cage.

The parrot lifted its wings. Every spectator—save perhaps one, for Sergey's Scotch heart beat stoutly in his breast—knew that it would strike. It lifted its wings, squawked, teetered on its perch, lowered its beak close to the proffered finger, then half flew, half hopped across the cage, beating the air, screeching atrociously: "*Konchala Konchala!*" ("Finished! Finished!")

"Well? What do you say to that, old girl?" asked the American in English, grinning at the Baba Papagai.

Her eyes were glazed. She crashed her fist upon the table.

"Dog! Dog!" she roared.

"*Belogvardeyetz! Belogvardeyetz!*" weakly echoed the parrot.

"Once more, you dog!" commanded the Baba Papagai.

"As often as you like," answered the American, and put his finger again through the bars.

This time the parrot never pretended to investigate. It cowered at the bottom of the cage, buried its beak in its breast feathers, and only when the Baba Papagai shrieked "Dog!" at the top of her voice did it respond with a low croak: "*Belogvardeyetz!*"

"What's the hour?" The Baba Papagai turned to the clerk beside her. Trembling, he pulled from beneath his sheepskin coat a massive gold repeater, said, "Fifteen minutes to midnight," and returned the former property of the Prince Rashkushin to his pocket.

"Release the prisoner. He is acquitted." The parrot woman kicked aside her table and strode down the aisle. For the sake of this one victim she could not disavow her favourite instrument of terror.

This time Sergey Sergeyitch McTavish sat up straight in his seat and stared at her as she passed him. The moment she disappeared, he ran forward and grasped the American by the hand.

"A Kelpie! I told you! A Kelpie!" he yelled crazily. "My father was right—my father knew."

Indifferent to the buzz of congratulations and the eager hands outstretched to them, the young soldier swung Sergey aloft.

"You're all right, kid," he shouted in English. "You may be cuckoo, but you're there with the goods." Then in Russian: "What was it, *malchik*? I kept it in my hand until the last, but afterward I dropped it. How did you do it?"

His mouth close to the other's ear, Sergey murmured: "Take a sniff at your finger."

The American gave a loud yell, then checked himself.

"Yes," whispered Sergey, "garlic—that's the charm against Kelpies."

The two set off at a trot for the home of Marfoosha.

THE PECULIAR TREASURE OF KINGS

BY MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS

From Saturday Evening Post

WHENEVER old Johnny Mathew had to rest his face from its enforced habit of cheerfulness he came and sat alone on his favourite bench in the little park at Charlotte Amalie, where his mild seaman's eyes could look out over the shimmering translucence of the bay, where the ships lay lightly. Over him and over the statue of some forgotten Danish prince in a cast-iron Prince Albert coat, a flagstaff pushed a bright American flag up into the steady wind from the Caribbean. It was a comfort to let his face sag and his eyes show their weariness that was often very like desperation, here where no one could notice him, among the raw red croton bushes and the tall upcurving coconuts. To-day even his shoulders sagged under his worn cotton coat, and his neatly trimmed gray beard drooped to his chest. Old Johnny had had a shock. He had seen his son.

He was on that bark out there in the harbour, the bark *Mary Parsons*, which three days ago, to his excitement, had moved beautifully under her own canvas to an anchorage among the coal steamers, stately as a lady and splendid as new hope. She was that to him. She meant that he might be able to get a berth on her, any sort of job, to escape from this fear he had of being sent back to the States by the authorities, shamefully, as a pauper. The small wad of money he had left after being discharged from the hospital here would not last another month, and his hopes of getting anything to do on any of these casual steamers that stopped for an hour or two were dwindling with it.

He knew steamships well enough. But, like the old sailing

man that he was, secretly he had a contempt for them—for steamships that battered and reeked their dirty way among the boom and slide of clean oceans which only sails, to his old-fashioned way of thinking, were fit to serve. The *Mary Parsons* was bound to Rio with lumber, he found out; but off St. Thomas her captain had been taken dangerously ill, and she had put in here so that he could be operated on at the hospital while she communicated with her owners. She was waiting now for orders. And John Mathew's own son, the son that Annie had made him promise never to hunt up or try to know, was the *Mary Parsons's* second mate.

He had noticed the boy for the first time yesterday morning, when he had had himself rowed out to the ship to speak to the mate about a berth. The feel of the ship under him, after these sickly months of earth, the orderly lift of her cordage over his head, had made him happy, although the mate had not been encouraging. He was genial enough about it, to be sure, with a surly sense of power already in the swing of his thick shoulders and his thick hands, and old Johnny had lingered to promote the general friendliness with one or two of those sprightly yarns he carried under his tongue, which often won him dinners from the men from the ships.

The mate, with the command of the *Mary Parsons* so nearly in his grasp, was ripe for friendliness. Old Johnny was a seaman and no beachcomber, he could feel him thinking. As a result, old Johnny spoke as an expert of the chicken at Yellow Charlie's and of Yellow Charlie's admirable habit of slipping a little very old Jamaica rum to the elbow of anyone he knew was right. That fixed everything. The mate promptly wanted to be shown.

So old Johnny had started for the ladder, feeling fairly cheery and looking thoroughly sprightly, when he saw the second mate. The thing that startled him was nothing he could put his finger on. It was just a whiff of something familiar in the look of that lean brown youth coming silently down the deck, with a still gray eye and a shut look to his mouth, as if something hot and dogged in him pulled tight at his lips, which might have been more restless than he cared to show. The older, smaller man stood for a moment at the ladder top, caught by that look of something that he had known. The second passed him with a cool glance full

in the eye, not bold so much as measuring, and the image of him stuck in old Johnny's mind in spite of his deeper concern.

He met the mate at the boat landing as the dark slid down the mountainside, and he saw that the second had come along in the boat too. Old Johnny talked easily as he led them up the cobbles, under the wooden galleries, past open doors and windows where lamplight splashed across the murmurous dark. They climbed among the heavy scent of jasmine and frangipani, and the tropic night hummed like Africa below the firm sound of the boots. Old Johnny hardly noticed what his tongue was saying because of the way his disturbed mind darted about the silent young figure at his shoulder. What was it about the boy?

Then over a table with the lamp on it, in the bare second-floor room at Yellow Charlie's, with the night wind bulging the flowered cotton curtain and the sound of feet shuffling by on the stones below, he had heard the mate say, "Mat Brandon here's our second, Mr. Mathew. I don't know's I told you." And in the moment in which the boy had stretched a hand, silently, to his, he had seen that scar in the left eyebrow.

It was only a thin white line that cut it sharply in two and went up the forehead an inch—an old scar, almost unnoticeable. But at the sight of that, old Johnny's body shivered with an unforgotten chill. He had caused that scar himself. It was a memory that turned him sick, even now, in his bed nights. The baby had slipped through his fingers as he held him high one time he had come home a little drunk. He remembered how he had been snatched from a jovial mist by the sight of the little thing bleeding where his forehead had struck the edge of a table. Nothing of anything that he had done, all his life, had been so bitter, so remorseful, so remorseless, as memory of that. His forehead was wet now, suddenly thinking of it.

It was his son, right enough—Mathew Brandon; a son a man could cotton to who had that empty place in him for something to be proud of. When a man's given up his house and his family, and the place where he grew up and the right to his memories and his name, he has that empty place in him. John Mathew, who had been John Mathew Brandon, thought of that, looking at that scar. Then he rapped on the

table smartly to let Yellow Charlie know he had brought him some more customers.

The mate found the chicken good and the old Jamaica rum much to his liking, and his red face turned a slow purple as old Johnny, who did not let himself drink much, kept up the talk that seemed always to be expected of him. The second mate, that young Mat Brandon, who from across the table grew to look more and more like his own grandfather but for the mouth and chin that were his mother's, did not drink much either. Old Johnny could not decide what that chin on the boy might mean. But he did see that he was like his mother in one thing. Under that quiet he was high strung. The stillness of his body was almost rigidity. His nerves were tight as fiddle strings under a waiting restraint.

The mate was drinking heavily and boasting now—boasting about the captain's illness and his own chance at the command. Drunk, he was a sloppy brute. Old Johnny saw that he would be blind drunk and helpless in another fifteen minutes. There was no use in his staying. He said so to Mat Brandon, who nodded carelessly, his gray eyes intent, dark in his waiting face.

Old Johnny's knees were a little shaky, going slowly down the twisty cobbled street, in the soft vast and blackness of the night. He had a clean bare room in an old Danish house, and he was glad to get there, worn out with all this unexpectedness. But the important thing was still that he should get away on that ship. If the captain did die, there would have to be changes. He wouldn't like that mate for captain, but that was not the point. And whatever promises he had made Annie about not ever seeing the son, whom she considered he had disgraced by his drinking, his lightness, his habit of slipping off to sea without her permission, his being undependable and uproarious, had nothing to do with his own necessity now. Poor Annie. She was such a hard-working, righteous woman. She had that dreadful habit of denying to a man even his last scant measure of self-respect.

He was thinking about that still, sitting on the bench among the crotons, staring out at the bark *Mary Parsons*, full in the diamond radiance of the light. Or rather, he was not so much thinking about his self-respect, as feeling it there in him, the very centre of himself. He had been uproarious and undepend-

able, as Annie had said. He had got drunk and wasted money and had disreputable friends. He had a habit of letting responsibility slip out of his grasp, and the morning sea with the sun on it and men's laughter and the moving sails of ships had set a wild gaiety burning in him—burning in his veins with the conviction that life was nothing to get so solemn about. Even now that he was nearly old, he felt that way still, often, all by himself in the sunshine.

But nobody would give command of a ship to a small man and a laugher. He knew he worked better for someone else. As a mate he wasn't bad. He could handle men well enough. He could stow a cargo cunningly to favour the nature of the ship. It had been Annie's chief complaint against him that he had no ambition, no drive—that he was soft.

Well, he had certainly been soft to promise what she wanted of him, to give up the house to her, and his name—and the boy. But on the other hand, it was the least he could do for her if she felt like that. What difference did it make? He knew that in this world he was too proud to explain himself or ask favours or hoard bitterness for things long done. Maybe men did not succeed like that. But any other was simply not the way he thought, that was all.

Abruptly now he looked up and saw his son striding intently along one of the paths, even as he was thinking about him. He walked frowning at the ground. A good tall boy, old Johnny thought with a throb of pleasure, broad-shouldered for all his slenderness. He wished that he knew what the thoughts were behind the narrowed eyes, and what the tight mouth would become in an emergency.

As he looked the other saw him and strode up. "There you are," he said quickly. "I was just wondering how I could get a-hold of you. We'll need you on the *Mary Parsons*. Captain Caddogan died this morning—and the mate's disappeared. He was so drunk I had to leave him there. I cabled the owners, and they told me to take the ship out at once, as captain."

The older man stared up at the narrowed gray eyes, a little darker than his own, which looked down at him unwinkingly. There was a fixity about the boy's face, as if he was more excited, secretly, than he would let appear. What he said had so surprised old Johnny that he stared up, unwinking, too, with something of that same fixity. It was as if the boy shared

some secret knowledge with him, but for the life of him old Johnny did not know what that could be. All he could say was, "You're—captain?"

"I've had my master's papers for a year," the other said firmly. "The owners knew that. They knew I was looking to better myself if the chance came. The mate should have known, the thick fool. They want the captain's body shipped back to his wife. So we're taking the ship out at five this afternoon."

"You've got a berth for me on her?" old Johnny said slowly, to be certain, in all this welter of thoughts.

"That's what I'm telling you—first mate," young Mat said impatiently. "It's a good thing for you and it's not a bad thing for me to find you here. The papers are ready to be signed at the port office, as soon as you can, Mr.—er—I forget——"

"Mathew," old Johnny said, with his jaw out and his eyes bright—"John Mathew. I can be ready in half an hour."

"Then get aboard as soon as you can, Mr. Mathew," his son said, and turned on his heel. "We've lost time enough as it is."

That was how John Mathew came to be standing at last by the lee rail of the *Mary Parsons* in the late afternoon, with the water of the open sea growing indigo ahead. The ship moved leisurely as she came out from between the sun-scorched headlands of the harbour, with the tug beside her, out until her spread sails, saffron with sunset, filled with the plumping steady force of the trades.

The new captain stood by the weather rail, casting his intent gray glance aloft with the swelling canvas and forward to the sea roughening to sapphire beyond the lifting bowsprit. Old Johnny observed him so, and the men forward who had brought the anchor up smartly under the ring of his own voice lusty with old power and new relief, and were now coiling down the ropes for running—observed the whole ship with a heart so light it was positively giddy. He told himself that a man escaped from hanging could feel no more thankful than he did. It ran from his warmed heart over his elderly, wiry body, down to his heels, like the stirrings of youth.

With the work of getting the ship clear of the land well done, he could pause for a minute, like this, standing silently by the lee rail, to feel that foolish young jig and giggle in his breast. He dared swear to himself at that moment that he felt

gayer and lighter-hearted than that surprising son of his, looking solemn over by the weather rail.

Now that he had time to think of this, free of anxiety, the situation was ridiculous. It tickled that easy sense of the ridiculous in him, the light ability for laughter, which poor Annie had found so hateful. He had to call his own son "Sir" whom he'd seen in diapers. It was good as a circus, when you came to think of it. Maybe about the hardest thing he'd have to do would be to keep his face straight.

And to think, besides, that he had never once had a smell at a command, not once in his life, and this young whipper-snapper had calmly walked up and had one tossed in his hat. But then, of course, young bub there had probably his mother's gift of wanting things fiercely. That was one good way of getting them, if you happen to want them. Old John admitted to himself cheerfully that he was not made that way. A first mate's berth now, with somebody to take the worst of the responsibility, a good ship like this one under his heels, a crew like that one forward that the other first mate had put the fear of God into, and that wasn't so bad, as crews went—well, he wouldn't ask much more than that. And it was decidedly something interesting—more than interesting—that his son was captain here. It gave him a feeling—he hardly knew what it was, except that it was pleasurable. Poor Annie! How she would hate it if she knew he was here, like this, with the heels of his heart jiggling and life once more running warmly in his veins.

The ship listed slightly and surged forward, having left all sounds of land behind her and filling her decks with the pleasantly prophetic murmur of full sails and taut cordage and a long wake curving and whitening behind to the already half-forgotten purple bulk of St. Thomas. Old Johnny gave no more than that one backward glance of his eye along the wake at those months of desperation behind him. It was not his way to clutter up his mind with old worries. He was more absorbed in the joy of his deliverance, which grew lustier with every blue wave that went under the forefoot, as if now for the first time he could see how he had snatched his very heel out of the sprung trap of poverty and sickness and old age. It might close on him yet, later. But it had not got him this time, by

ginger, and it would be a long time before it had another chance!

The young captain walked his place on the deck, and the elderly mate walked his, with their eyes occasionally up and always forward and their faces showing no more than the firm sound of their own boot heels on the planks what thoughts were turning and turning in their heads. Old Johnny went below presently to his supper, on the table that was like so many ship's tables, under the skylight that was like so many that he had known, and he was served by a steward who might have been any one from a number of ships he could remember, looking back down the long alley of his years. The steward, more specifically, was Greek, with a flabby fat face smudged with a shaven beard like charcoal dust on his jowls, and flabby fat hands. The food was nothing to boast of, but old Johnny would not have it changed for Yellow Charlie's finest chicken for anything in the world. He slept heavily later, in the berth that had belonged to the red-faced mate, heavy as a runner exhausted with victory.

He woke easily, as his habit was, to take his watch at midnight, and went on deck lively as a cricket. Yet now that he had slept on his happiness and his sense of escape, he found his thoughts moving, as they had in their sleep, with a kind of deep concern about the figure of his son. On deck, the night was soft and huge and quiet, with the ship moving like a lighted shadow below the great shadows that were sails against the stars, and he could speak quietly to the man at the helm and see to the course and recognize with a quick glance the set of the sails and the quiet figures of his watch forward, even while his deeper thoughts went on.

It was certainly strange to think of having a son, a grown son, a son who followed the water and was the captain of a ship at his age—twenty-four, was it, or twenty-five? It was strange to have a human being near him linked by the cobweb ties of old memories, pain and dreariness and forgotten gleams of delight. It was not so much the thoughts of the past disturbed him, walking slowly and observantly by the weather rail, as that he found himself absorbed, more deeply than he had ever remembered being, in a sort of concern about his son. It was like a slow, insatiable curiosity.

What sort of man was he?—that was the whole question. What things did he have in him, in the tough-woven fibre of his own individuality, that he had had from his father or from his mother? What was there of his own, besides the unknown fusion of his grandfathers and his great-grandfathers? Would he, in a temper, go screaming mad the way his mother did, or like his great-uncle Joshua on the Brandon side, who used to get sick to his stomach when he fought? Would he stand up to things and endure them without a word, like his grandfather on his mother's side, or would he give way under the stress of sober burdens, like his own father?

Old Johnny brought himself up against the rail with the force of that. No, by ginger, he wouldn't want his son to be the sort of man he was! No! No, by heaven! He saw himself at that moment too clearly. He was what he was, and he would stand for anything that came to him as a result of it—stand and not murmur and not regret. But he did not want his son to be like him. There would be no pride for him in learning that his son was like him. But if he were better, if he could prove himself better, better able to meet life on its own terms, more complete, more master of himself, more of a—well, of a man—ah, there would be pride for you!

Old Johnny threw his head back, and his shoulders, as a little shudder of revelation struck him, thinking what it would be like to be as proud as that. If what Annie was, that difficult, righteous, high-strung woman, and what he was could fuse somehow into the body and being of this son so that he could be a new being, made of them both and of all their shadowy trails of forbears, but a better one than either—great jumping Jupiter Amon, old Johnny saw blindingly, that would be—why, that would be—along with food and work to do that you could do, on a good ship—well, that would be about all a man could ask for!

It was a damn sight more than he had ever thought to ask for, he told himself soberly, watching the stars wheel and giving an ear to the creak of cordage and the rushing sound of water under the driven bows, slow deep rollers foaming along timber, that answered to the same deep chord in him who had heard it so almost all the years of his life.

When the new second mate of the *Mary Parsons*, who had been the boatswain, a Swede, a thin chap with a long bony

head and knobby hard hands, awkward on the end of stringy arms, came up to relieve him, with the light from the binnacle flashing up on his long gold eye teeth and his tow-coloured eyebrows as he glanced down to read the card, old Johnny went below to his berth, sobered with the weight of so much thinking. The last thing he thought of, rolling over in his bunk, was that he hoped to God he wasn't going to turn sentimental. At his age that would be hard to bear.

The dazzling morning brightness splashed through the open skylight on the cups and plates that the steward was laying for breakfast. Old Johnny glanced up through the opening at the piled white of the canvas and at the compass swinging over the captain's place, assuring himself that nothing much of importance about the ship had been changed while he slept. The wind was holding well. The young captain dropped down the stairs from the after deck, where he had been having a look around for an hour or two, in his pajamas, and nodded at his first mate, standing quietly by his chair.

"Fine morning, sir," old Johnny said, repressing violently the muscle in the corner of his mouth that would twitch. "I see the wind's holding."

"Good wind, all right," his son replied absently, sitting down. "Hey, steward, what's the idea? The bacon's burned and my knife's not clean. Is that coffee hot, Mr. Mate? No, I thought not. Take back this dishwater, steward, and tell the cook to pull himself together. Perhaps you both think you can get by with this as you did when the other captain was sick. I'm giving you fair warning now. I'm not going to have anything dirty or slovenly on my ship. If you can't scour the knives there's plenty men forrard who'd be glad of your place. I want this whole place swept up and the finger marks washed off the door paint. At eleven I shall inspect your pantry, and you can warn the cook I shall look into the galley. Send the carpenter aft and have him fix that loose hinge on my door. Snap into it now!" His mouth shut and he sugared his oatmeal deliberately, and old Johnny dipped into his, still checking his wild desire to laugh.

That was Annie's very housecleaning eye the boy had on him. She used to be death on finger marks on the door paint. But it was a good thing in a ship captain. No sense to letting

things go slovenly. That red-faced mate, who had thought himself so sure of this command, would hardly have noticed if the knives had never been washed.

What had happened to that mate, by the way, old Johnny thought suddenly, as the subdued steward brought him a smoking cup of coffee. Drunk and disappeared! What did the boy mean by "disappeared"? Surely he couldn't mean done away with! Old Johnny glanced slowly at the young captain silently inspecting the new platter of bacon, and studied that tight mouth and that jaw. Was it a jaw that would not stop at anything when there was something he wanted?

Old Johnny had hardly thought of that before because he had had so much else to think of. Men had got drunk and men had disappeared, to his knowledge, before this. But he had seen this boy's face that night, watching the red-faced man turn swinish and sodden, and the memory of that look on it—that intent, high-strung, very nearly dangerous look—struck him now with a light chill. There was the same face at the head of the table, still intent, still silent, but now it had a ruddy colour under the brown, and the mouth had smiled at him.

The boy was wearing the first day of his command with an unmistakable joyousness under the restraint of his position. Yet what had he done to bring him to it? It troubled old Johnny more than he liked to confess. Was he growing squeamish as well as sentimental in his old age? What difference did it make to him? He was here, wasn't he?

It was pleasant to be on deck in the broad brilliance of the morning, with the ship racing forward splendidly over a sea of ridged and dazzling indigo. The intent face of the captain was there by the weather rail. And presently he was ordering more sail crowded on. Old Johnny snapped with vigour into his work, letting his head blow clear of thoughts. The jib boom thrashed steadily at the southward horizon. The deck bustled.

When the work of spreading the additional canvas was done the captain ordered the standing rigging overhauled, replaced, and repaired, and told old Johnny privately that if that didn't keep the men busy enough he could have out the chipping hammers and get at the cable. Old Johnny saw that there was something working at the boy behind his tight

mouth and his narrowed eyes—something that drove him as he was driving the men and the ship.

Well, that was all right, the mate thought mildly, getting into the stride of his job. The boy seemed to know his stuff. He had ambition. If it was work he wanted, old Johnny could supply it for him. It was good to get at it again after all these months. In no time at all he had the decks humming with orderly activity. The men weren't a bad sort. He let them have a joke or two now and then along with orders, and liked the way they took to it. He was getting to know the members of the crew as individuals, recognizing an old hand and a good worker here and there, recognizing which ones would shirk in a pinch and which ones could be depended on.

There was a little red-headed feller in his own watch who made him laugh, he was so like a monkey. Restless like a monkey and always on the grin. But a smart hand, none better. He knew well that what often seemed like freshness and impudence from a man like this was only a kind of nervous energy. Give a feller like that a pace to set the others and he'd have them all looking lively. That kind would work harder on a joke at the right minute than for a dozen belaying pins ready up the sleeve. Not that old Johnny wouldn't be there with a blackjack any time he had to. But he never liked that way.

The captain was certainly driving that ship. Morning after morning the mate found him crowding on every thread she could bear. Day after day she went booming down the latitudes with a bone in her teeth and a white wake boiling astern. And day after day the small elderly mate, caught up into the accustomed routine of a ship, the orderly sequence of watches, the work of the day and the work of the night, found himself accustomed to the hidden things which worked in his mind about the captain, who was strangely also his son.

He knew little more about him than he had learned at first. He had turned no more pages in what was practically a book closed and locked to him. The boy was there, intent on his work, vigilant, unsparing of himself, a capable master. His driving force might often seem like a force that was driven. His mouth never was allowed to slip into restlessness. What he thought—by the captain's rail in the captain's watches, shut in his own room nights, pacing the deck in some tranquil

hour of loneliness before sundown, when the sea was roughened lightly by the good following winds—old Johnny could not guess.

But one thing the mate did know, and that was that in spite of himself he was growing proud of that boy. Day by day the warmth of that lifted in that empty place in him—lifted until the elderly man thought often he must be all lighted up with it like a church on fire. It caught him unexpectedly, in a long night watch or moving among the men or swapping yarns with the second mate. It crept over him suddenly like day out of the sea, and there he would be in a breathless moment, blazing with pride.

He was proud of the ship, too, and the way the men were working, but he could talk about that pride. They were all proud of that ship, and they talked about it—the watch off duty forward, and the mates aft, having another cup of coffee after supper, with their elbows on the table and their eyes turning automatically now and then through the open skylight to the high piled sails, ruddy with the dregs of a great tropic sun. But the other pride was a secret thing, a thing he had all to himself, to hoard and hug to himself, rolled up in his bunk or walking silently by the helmsman, in the long nights or the blue, amazing afternoons.

Then the northeast trades, blowing fitfully over a sea smooth as bright hot pewter, failed. The ship rolled a little on the long polished swells, her yards creaking, her empty sails slatting. The sky was stainless; an infinity of blue burned a fierce white at the zenith, where the bare sun smoked. The ship's rails were scorching to the hand. Her shadow lay short under her bows, blue fire, through which the dolphins arched their backs. Only smudges of light airs darkened idly the immense platter of the sea. The lowered careless voices of the crew at work in whatever shade they could find sounded loud in the dazzling stillness.

Young Captain Mat Brandon stood and clutched the poop railing with stiffened fingers. His forehead was ridged under his visor. The mate, with that quick old glance of his that always included the figure of the young captain in his observation of the ship, saw that the dark gray eyes glittered. From time to time he strode to the rail to see if in some vagrant air the

ship had steerage way. But she lay heavily, with the swells hissing up and down her sides, as if she were anchored.

"The Old Man's taking it hard," the second mate muttered to the first, meeting him below the poop.

Old Johnny had no temptation to smile now at the humour in calling the captain that. He was used to it by now. He only frowned a little himself and changed the subject uneasily. He was uneasy, not so much at the hot calm itself—he'd lived through dozens—but at the mounting tension he felt in the boy. He could read every inflection of his, every muscle twitch, every suppressed, smouldering gesture. Annie had been like that. He had always been able to read the storm signs days before. Old Johnny would turn from his involuntary study of the young face with a half sigh. It wouldn't do for him to be too much like his mother.

It was a long day before the captain would acknowledge that the wind had failed. He could not believe it—he would not at first. It was only a temporary lull. No wind could flat out so completely. The mate saw the growing bitterness in the boy, as if the weather were a personal injustice. Yet the steely hours wore on, burning and absorbed. The sun glared to westward slowly, with the round metal of the ship's bells hurrying after. Behind the captain's back, the man at the helm, one hand upon the unmoving wheel, whistled idly and long drawn out for the wind which did not come.

That night there was a moon—a great hot lopsided thing, slitting the hot black circle of the sea to lay its incandescence on the unwrinkling water and upon the ship. Her decks were bleached bone white with it, and the sails hung white and the shadow of the rigging lay across the deck, black barred like iron. The ship moved and dipped to the unseen milky swells alongside and all her sails slatted dismally. The watch off duty gathered on the fore hatch, and men sang in a straggling chorus to the gasp of an accordion someone had brought on deck. The glaring white of the moon fell upon huddled naked shoulders and sprawling legs, and old Johnny could make out colours in the luminance, the dull blue of dungarees, the red of a mopping bandanna.

The captain's boot heels sounded loud upon the planks. He stopped by the rail and spoke suddenly, gnawing his lip:

"Damn that accordion! I always hate the things. I suppose that red-headed idiot's playing it. That's him yowling off key. I'd like to see his jaw knocked shut for once."

"He's a good hand enough," old Johnny said mildly after a pause. It was the undertones of the boy's voice he hated—too ragged, too much like Annie's—not like the master of a ship.

"Of course you'd put in your oar for him," young Mat said violently. "You and he are as thick as thieves. It's the grinning way he acts I can't stand. Smart Aleck. I'd like to smash that blasted accordion."

"Got no call to interfere with a man off duty," old Johnny insisted stoutly.

The captain said vehemently, "Aw, you're an old——" and stopped himself abruptly. "Listen!" he said. "Is that wind?"

There were no sounds except of the slack sails and the men's voices forward. Around the horizon, below the blistering radiance of the moon, the stars burned steadily, like the lights of far-off ships. There was no wind. The captain ground his teeth on his burst of talk. The old mate kept silent. The captain resumed his dogged walk.

An hour or two later he stopped abruptly and said, "I shan't go below much until the wind comes."

He was on deck a long time. Old Johnny, coming up after the deep refreshment of his sleep, washed and sprightly, saw him having his morning coffee under the awning, his eyes reddened slightly with sleeplessness, his hair on end. The crew were cheerfully washing down the deck with a great splash and glitter of water from the brimming buckets. The red-head made some sort of joke behind his hand to the man next him and glanced aft at the captain, and the old mate hoped that Mat had not noticed it. The man was harmless enough, and his joking was even valuable. Old Johnny had seen before this what heat and calm and inactivity could do to the raw nerves of men. He tried to keep them healthily busy.

He wished with all his heart he could do the same thing for the boy there, eating his heart out for wind for his first ship.

But all day there was no wind, and the next, and the next.

Not a hatful, not a capful, not even a decent handful of air, to stir the heat which quivered up from the decks, where the glue between the planks melted and bubbled slowly. The men, stripped to their waists, went about their work with the sweat shining on their brown muscles, yawning in the widening or narrowing shadows of the sails. On the unstirring plate of the sea the shadows of the topmasts, like blades of a sundial, lengthened and wheeled and shortened under the sun.

The maddening futility of the dead calm was drawing the crew into silent and uncertain tempers, as old Johnny had known would happen. Tension seemed to spread to them from the gaunt young figure of the captain, his sombre face drawn and blackened by the breathless sun. He would stare with blistered eyes at the blazing surface of the ocean, standing by the rail so long and so rigidly that the crew glanced up at him more often than ever, and whispered among themselves. Sometimes he paced doggedly, sometimes he dashed below for a mouthful of water or a bite of food taken hastily, glancing up through the skylight to see if the wind had come in his absence from the deck.

Among the crew bad feeling bred, and endless small explosions of wrath. Old Johnny played endless games of double solitaire with the second in the breathless nights, feeling the heat as nothing beside the mounting tension on the ship. His bright observant eye saw everything. In a low voice, so that it would not annoy the captain, he spun long picturesque yarns that kept the second mate's blue eye bulging and drew the cook and the steward to the pantry threshold, with their eyes eager and their mouths grinning. He loved to hold them like that by the colour and cunning of his words. It kept them good-natured—and him too.

But he could do nothing for the captain. That was about what it meant to be captain of a ship. Nobody could do anything for you. It was all on your shoulders. The fact of that was an isolation. That was why old John had never had any hankering after a command. He liked to be closer to people than that. But now, without any interest or desire on his part, it was almost as if he shared the feelings of command through the nerves and body of his son. It was a curious feeling of double existence, and it made it worse that he could not substitute for the younger tension his own older stability and

understanding. He grinned often at the irony of it. But there it was, and it got worse.

The captain was taking his baulked will out on the crew in irritating and—or so it seemed to the mate—unreasonable orders. He lashed at them unexpectedly for almost invisible faults. And the small red-headed man was his particular victim. He kept him down painting the sail locker by the light of a lantern all one stifling day, from which the mate later had to haul the man, nearly all in, on a pretext. The uncertain tempers of the crew flamed at what they considered persecution, and furious looks and mutterings were turned aft toward the figure of the captain. The mate walked steadily among the men at work, with his voice steady and his eye cool, and that night at supper took without a word a burst of anger from the captain. He did not mind the anger. He was only deeply worried that the boy should have himself so little in hand.

Three days more—four days, and no wind but a light current of air which carried them southward for an hour and dropped them in the same centre of the same brazen, unchanging circle, that went white with sun or purple black with the sun's passing, like a slow shutter turned on and off. Tension ran like a red-hot wire through the men cooped forward between the blistering bulwarks. One corner of the captain's mouth slipped from its tightness, and he gnawed it endlessly.

That night, in the middle of his own watch, when the captain had been below for an hour trying to get some sleep, old Johnny had a sudden impulse to go below also. Or perhaps he only wanted to reassure himself that the captain was asleep. The second mate's snores were vibrant from his own room. But in the dim stifling light of the cabin, with the lowered lantern and the starlight streaming in, the old mate stopped abruptly and felt his knees tremble.

The door of the captain's room was open. There was a dim light in there also. The captain was standing with his back to the doorway and he was pouring something out of a long bottle into a glass.

Right then old Johnny knew how badly the boy wanted that drink, because he wanted one himself with every fibre of his old body. He had never needed a drink so badly in his life. He could have snatched the bottle from the hand and drunk

from it with the sudden hot force of the desire that burned him. Yet that familiar pose, the tiny sound of liquid pouring, was like acid eating into him—because it might be that in this the boy was like him. If he were like him, old Johnny knew, and clenched his hand on the table edge to realize, that one drink was not going to be enough. The warm relaxing that would work along the fingers, the blurring of the painful edges of reality, the delicious approach of oblivion along jangling nerves—old Johnny knew all that. He ached for it at that moment. But it meant drunkenness. His old fist slammed on the table. Not drunkenness for the captain of a ship!

The sound startled the tall young figure. He turned around, the bottle in one hand, the brimming glass in the other. In the half light his eyes met the fixed gaze of the old man with a desperate glassiness.

The older man said slowly, "I wouldn't, sir, if I were you. It's tough on you. I can see that. And a drink would go good. I'll say that myself. But I wouldn't if I were you."

The glassy eyes held his as he spoke with nothing in his face or voice but quietness—no tension, no accusation. He thought for a moment the boy would raise the glass to his lips and drink anyway, from the spasm that contracted the face suddenly.

But presently he dropped his eyes to the glass as if he had not seen it before and said huskily, "What'll I—do with it, then?"

"Throw it out the porthole," old Johnny said evenly. "And the bottle with it. There'll be better bottles in Rio, when we're off the ship."

They listened to the small splashes in the dark sea outside there, and the old man ached a little at the face young Mat turned to him. There were deep lines of sleeplessness in it, but the eyes were not the hot ones of a thwarted drunkard so much as the bewildered ones of a little boy.

"Come up on deck, sir," old Johnny said, and if his voice was tender he couldn't help it. "It's stifling down here. I'll have your canvas chair brought up. You've got to let yourself go a little, you know. This calm won't last forever."

The night was at least quiet, up there—so quiet it seemed they could hear the dew dripping from the sails. The air was lukewarm, like half-cooled tea, but at least it could be

breathed. Men forward, sleeping half naked on the forehatch, moved arms or legs uneasily, and the watch about the deck were listless drooping shadows.

Old Johnny had the captain's canvas chair set in the deep shadow of the rail. But for a while the boy stood with his elbows on the broad rail, and old Johnny put his elbows on it and leaned beside him. Down in the milky gray of the sea alongside phosphorus stirred with little stirrings of the surface, soft brightness licking along the still timbers. Old Johnny wrenched his mind hastily from his thought that that rum bottle might be floating down there, bobbing about, where it could be picked up with a bucket on a line. The boy's shoulders were beside his.

Old Johnny found himself fumbling in his mind for the most gorgeous, the longest-winded yarn he knew, and slowly found it, glittering, in the depths of his memory. He began to pay it out gently, every word in its right place, the suspense built up with little pauses. Under the stir of its events laughter ran like a healing flame. It was the best tale he knew, and he told it of himself and Bill Broadhead—a tale of a ship derelict and haunted in tropic seas, an old stocking full of pearls, an island of hidden temples and birds like blazing emeralds, and Bill Broadhead fighting with a cutlass up ruined stairs in moonlight, that led to women's laughter and a huge escape. He knew, as the young head beside his was held rigid in the glamour he cast cunningly, like a net, that he had never told the tale better in all his life. He knew he had never told it with so serious an intent.

When it was over and the hour was gone he stayed silent until the boy beside him moved with a half sigh, moved and stretched and grinned.

"That was one swell yarn," he said lightly, and his face was easy in the glow of the starboard lantern—"one swell yarn. A stockingful of pearls, eh? I bet that feels nice in the hand. Wow! I guess I must be sleepy."

The canvas chair creaked a little under his weight. Old Johnny did not move from the rail. The idle sails slatted a little with the movement of the ship. Presently he turned around and looked over at the long figure in the chair. It was still, and a hand was heavy on the deck. The captain was asleep. Old Johnny stood there, not moving a finger, staring

down. Deeper than the awakened desire for drink an ache moved in him. There was something about those young bony knees that broke his heart. It was as physical as that, as if something clutched and tore his heart wide open. The worst of it was, he could do nothing to help him—not one thing.

The actual pain of that astonished him. He would not have believed he could feel like that about anyone. It drove him back to his need for a drink. He felt as he had used to, coming off a long dry voyage, burning up with thirst. Well, he'd just have to go thirsty, that was all. He'd thrown away his chance, he told himself with grim humour, and it wouldn't do for the mate to be seen fishing off the poop with a bucket. He'd have to drink water, and like it, and pray for wind. He did, at that.

The next night there was a fight forward, sudden as the breaking of a stretched wire. Old Johnny had been expecting it. The men came tumbling from the forecastle to form a muttering rampart about the locked dark figures swaying and grunting and grappling in the shadow. The captain watched with a furious face, but old Johnny strolled forward. The men were not too intent to make way for him, and he stood there watchful and alert.

They were not fighting with knives, he was glad to see. There was the thud of bare feet on the deck and the smack of honest blows on bare flesh. The circle of the men shifted with the shifting of the fighters. And in a gasping bit of silence, when the slippery bodies clinched and fumbled, old Johnny raised a remark or two, the heavy broad wit men liked, and listened appraisingly to their sudden roar of laughter. Presently, in another pause, amid more laughter, the men were separated and helped off to wash. Old Johnny strolled aft again, with the relaxed voices of the crew behind him, drowsy as bees after a swarm.

The captain's eye was a dark coal as he went up the ladder. "I won't have fighting aboard my ship," he snapped. "Another time you can have them clapped in irons. I won't have it, I tell you!"

"Just a scuffle," the old man said easily. "Ought to have boxing gloves aboard—take the edge off them."

"I begin to think you've a poor idea of discipline, Mr. Mate," the captain said furiously. "How'd you expect me to

run this ship with a soft crew that isn't taught a proper respect for their officers?"

The old man looked him mildly in the eye. "They'll work all right," he said. The captain snorted and walked away. Old Johnny looked after him reflectively. Now the boy's mother, after that, wouldn't have spoken to him for three days.

But he had not to wait that long. For that afternoon the sea darkened fitfully in long widening fans, and wind moved, ruffling and undependable, about the ship. The sails filled slowly to a fresher breeze that presently blew west by south, blowing away the stifling exhalation that hung about her. The ship answered the helm. The watch sprang smartly to trim the yards, and the captain, hearing the shouts of the mate, the thud of feet and the creaking of tackle, let all the tension slip from his face in one long grin. But no sooner was the ship an hour or two upon her course than the wind drooped and died and the ship lay again becalmed. In another hour a breeze sprang from a totally different quarter, so swiftly that the ship was almost taken aback. The yards were squared. The ship heeled slightly on another course. And in four hours more, in a glassy moment of twilight, the breeze left them altogether.

So it went for five days of variable, inconstant, heartbreaking airs. The captain chewed his lips over his charts and at his sights, and his face was drawn and dark. The men dropped into their bunks after duty, worn out mentally as well as physically by the constant fret of labour that did no good. And the old mate began to know that he was old. There were twinges in his back after a long watch, such as he had never felt, and when he went below to his bunk his legs felt a thousand years in them. His vigilance, his spring, was outwardly as good as the younger man's. But inside him it was as if a bell had been struck. Yet with all the force of his inherent pride he fought all that off, aches and slowing up and sleeplessness and an unresting, burning desire for a drink. His jaw was tight and his eye was keen. The captain did not call him easy now.

At last, after a night of dead calm, the ship began to move steadily forward. The light was pearly, the greenish waves edged with slate. As the day gathered under slow gold swords

striking upward behind low clouds and across a long sea, the breeze freshened and the foresail filled. The captain and both mates stood on deck to watch the ship go forward in the new clean light, and it was as if a tight band had snapped from about their chests. They were out of the doldrums at last.

"It will hold," the captain said, with sleeplessness bleary on his eyelids. "Call me if it doesn't." And he went below.

After four hours the captain came on deck again. The wind was fresh and strong. The cordage hummed. On the yards the great spread of canvas held stiff over seas foaming in sapphire, touched with frothing, vivacious lines of white. The captain's face was scrubbed and jubilant, but the driving force, new lighted, blazed in his eyes.

Now the *Mary Parsons* moved steady as a steamer under the roaring glorious south trades, and old Johnny gloried to see her go, never once relaxing that cautious grip he had upon himself. It would not be two weeks to Rio in this wind.

There was a week left—five days—four days. The crew were tidying up the ship for port, scraping teak, polishing brass, painting interminably. A pleasant sense of journey's end ran about them. Only the captain did not relax in it. He was still feverish to make time, to get the voyage done.

What happened thereafter happened like a clap of thunder on a clear day. There were only three days left before making port, and already the wind was shifting a little, tainted with the land. To westward a sullen bank of mist lay low like dirt-coloured mountains.

Old Johnny came on deck in the middle of his watch below the next morning, drawn by the changed colour of the light and the abrupt motions of the ship. It was racing and bucking against a sea of fretted heaving milk under the damp blast of a sullen southwest wind. The helmsman stood stiffly, his anxious eyes on the sails, fighting the jerked rudder. But the captain had not shortened sail. The watch forward were gazing at the sea and at the sails, and then aft, as if awaiting an order. The captain stood like an iron post by the rail, and his face was iron.

Old Johnny hurried up with the wind in his blinking eyes. "What about shortening sail?" he shouted. "I don't like the look of that. It feels like a pampero."

"Pampero your eye!" the captain snapped. "You're getting

old, Mathew. You're losing your grip. Want me to run before every little squall, do you?"

"But look!" The mate clutched the younger arm.

The bank of dirt-coloured cloud was climbing the sky fiercely. Through it lightning spread in seams and below it the sea went the colour of dirt. The ship plunged and pitched in the damp uncertain air that pushed the men in the face. The captain tightened his jaw and shook off the hand impatiently, turning his back to the wind.

Then pandemonium. Old Johnny was aware of a vast force which fell like a stone upon him and upon the ship—a force demoniac and shrieking before which the ship reeled violently. Above in the screaming murk a sail blew out like a shot from a cannon. In the constant ghastly flicker of lightning he saw it flash whitely once down the wind. He was struggling to turn his body about and open his eyes and shout an order. But his voice was crammed back into his lungs. The slant of the deck before him was a high hill, racing with stinging rain.

The ship righted herself with a long shudder and the wind caught her, and forward there were crashings and poundings and a boil of sea over the weather rail. As he stared wildly through half-opened eyes he saw the fore-top gallant sheet give way. The gallant sail straightened out like a plank, straining the mast until it quivered and bent. In the instant the fore-royal and gallant yards broke off with a shrieked crashing, toppling on the streaming deck among the hissing flight and tangle of ropes. One man was knocked down like a belaying pin and rolled into the lee scuppers. The others scattered where they could. The débris hung half over the lee rail, bumping dangerously, and the ship listed to it under the ghastly foam pouring over the lee rail.

The captain's voice, that strained the blood vessels on his forehead, lifted faintly across the wind. "All hands! Leggo main royal and gallant halyards! Lively! Another blow——"

The men swarmed to the order, slipping and struggling and catching at the fife rail as the ship reeled, shuddering, and the roused sea struck viciously.

"Axes!" the captain bellowed through cupped hands. "Axes—wreckage—adrift!" And with the old mate at his heels he raced down the ladder.

They were immediately above their knees in the sea that shipped regularly over both rails. Old Johnny gasped with the cold of it and the wrenching blows of it on his body. The murky light was lifting, and now it seemed that the wind struck with less force, but it was a back-breaking job to swing axes and keep footing. Old Johnny heaved his with the packed force of every muscle and his son's heaving shoulders were beside him, in the tail of his eye.

The wind screamed suddenly, and behind the captain's head a huge sea lifted a dirty edge over the rail. It crashed inboard, shaking the ship. Old Johnny had dropped his ax and clutched the rail, but almost as it toppled he looked for his son, letting go his clutch to leap toward him, yelling, "Mat, look out!"

He felt a terrible wrenching heave, and under the ton of cold water that fell on him something that might have been a rope caught him about the knees. The world heaved violently, whirling, and became a seething drop into darker water, bottomless. He gulped wet bitter salt, whirling and staring into boiling dark depths. Something crashed into his ribs, and the pain sent him dizzy, even as he had a flashed glimpse of the ship to windward, and a gulp of air. He clawed the air with a dripping hand and shouted. "Mat—Mat!" he yelled, and yelled again, before he was knocked into blackness and oblivion.

When he came back into the world, it was slowly, among mists of weakness that were curiously delicious. His body was a vagueness in which he floated, and in his fogged glance grew slowly the familiar white-painted planks with bolts in them above his head. He recognized that the ship was moving easily, even as he knew the handles of the chest of drawers built across the wall at his feet. Oblivion caught at him from time to time, and he sank back into it gratefully, among thronging hints of dream. But clearer and more persistent than those were the drawer handles and the white-painted bolts and something round and whitish that slowly became the steward's face before it changed to the face of his son, the captain of the ship.

He was broad awake then and his body was a battered thing between immovable tightness, but he could look about

him with clear eyes and a clear head and see his own gnarled old hands on the blanket and the buttons on his son's coat. He grinned slowly.

"It feels as if I got run through a meat grinder," he said. "How's the ship?"

"Booming along in," Mat Brandon said cheerfully.

The old man took a long slow look into the boy's face. There was an untidy bristle of beard on it, and it was white and lined deeply with fatigue. But the locked look was gone from the mouth, and there was no fever in the gray eyes that met his calmly. New warmth ran through old Johnny as staunch as his own heart's beats. He liked the released look on that face—by ginger, he liked it!

"You've got a couple of busted ribs on you," the captain of the ship was saying. "The steward and I fixed them up as well as we could according to the book, but I'll be glad to get you ashore to a doctor. We'll be in to-morrow sometime. How do you feel?"

"Comfortable, 's a matter of fact," old Johnny said. He was discovering that he must not breathe too deeply. An arrow of pain lay there, as if in waiting. And he was growing aware of many aches. "How'd I get aboard?"

"That red-headed feller," Mat said. "He jumped after you like chain lightning, and we slung him a rope. His collar bone's broken. You know I—it's funny, but I've been wishing right along, since then, that I had gone over for you myself."

"Crazy," old Johnny said slowly, trying to stiffen his lips against a grin. He was watching the boy's unconscious face through half-shut eyes. "That'd been a fine thing to do, and you the master of a ship!"

"Yeah," the boy said slowly. His elbows were on his knees and his eyes were on his loosely clasped fists. "Of course I knew that. But you know I've been thinking—it was my fault we got overtaken that way. I was wild not to lose any more time."

"Aw, those pamperos—you can't ever tell about them. You'll have to remember you got to keep your eye peeled along this coast. And you're right about being wild. You've been kinda too strung up tight all this trip. You better not be like that another time."

"I know," Mat said shamefacedly. "I don't know what got

into me. But I guess I got to worrying about that mate. I'd sort of like to tell you about the mate."

"No need to if you don't want to," old Johnny said briefly, with his eyes screwed tight and his heart thumping.

"I been wanting to all along. It kinda got into my head that you thought I murdered him—or something. And then I got to worrying about what the owners would do if they heard about it. That's why I was so wild when the wind failed, and afterward, when there was a chance to make up the time. You see—the mate got himself drunk. You remember. You were there. But then I got him drunker than that and I had him hidden. That Yellow Charlie had him taken to a shack out in the jungle somewhere. I paid him. He wasn't hurt any. You see, I wanted the ship more than he ever did. It was a rotten trick, of course. But I'm not sorry."

"What you going to do about it?" old Johnny said suddenly, opening his eyes.

"Nothing yet," he said, meeting the old man's eye firmly. "There's nothing sensible yet to be done about it, except going up and telling the owners just how it was when I get the ship back to New York. Maybe the mate's made a howl by this time. I don't care. I'm going to prove to them I can handle the ship for them better than he could. And I want to say—I've got a lot to thank you for. You've taught me an awful lot."

"Aw, shucks!" old Johnny said weakly, shuffling his hands on the blanket. "You were only a stiff kid. Man's got to grow some to be a captain. I followed the water and learned the different ways of captains before you were born. And you've grown. I can see that. You'll be a good one. It's like you had good seagoing blood in you and a will to do things well and smartly. Only you don't need to take things so highstrung."

"I'll tell the world you get steadied," Mat said absently. "I feel years older. I wish you were going to be along on the voyage back."

The old man looked steadily at a bolt over his head. That's right. He'd be in hospital again. And after that—— The slow pain dug into him at his deeper breath. Oh, well, why worry?

"Maybe you'll drop me a card from New York," he said. "I'll be curious about—the ship."

"I'm going to do that," Mat said slowly. "I'm sure going

to do that. And you'll write me when you get well, whether you get another berth or not. It might be—we might ship together sometime again."

"I won't be holding many more mate's jobs," old Johnny said calmly. "I'm pleased to know you'd like to, though."

"Well, you'll let me know," Mat said, getting up. "I'd kind of like to know. I'll tell the steward to bring you some soup." In the door, he stood a moment and turned back. "You've never said"—he spoke slowly—"whether you've got any folks or not that you could go to. I've wondered. Haven't you got somebody—a son—somewhere?"

The grin that spread over old Johnny's face at that could not by any force of his be repressed. His eyes leered a little in sheer delight at the joke of it as he looked up into the other's concerned face. Poor Annie, how she'd hate it if she knew how her son stood there, looking down at him with anxiety and—yes, there was no doubt of it—with affection. How she'd hate to know that her worthless husband was actually being cared for by her son. Well, he'd keep his promise to her.

"No," he lied cheerfully, "I haven't got any son."

After Mat had gone out he lay there, wrapped in comfort, his mouth still twitching at the thought of it with something very like a giggle. Deep down in the place where his pride lived, that would not let him explain or regret or ask quarter from his world, the increased flame of it lifted in a great warming glow.

He'd been weak and mistaken and foolish in his time. He'd been proud, without having much of anything to be proud of. But now, he thought, a king couldn't be any prouder than he was or had the right to be. Now, by Jupiter, he was the father of a man!

BRIDAL POND

By ZONA GALE

From American Mercury

THE Judge had just said "Case dismissed," and a sharp situation concerning cheese had thus become negligible when, before the next case on the calendar could be called, Jens Jevins came forward and said loudly:

"I wish to confess to the murder of my wife."

Now the courtroom was still, the fierce heat forgotten, and the people stupefied, for Jens Jevins was the richest farmer in the township. No one tried to silence or delay him.

He faced now the Judge and now the people, his face and neck the colour of chicken skin, his tossed hair like a ravelled fabric, his long right arm making always the same gesture. His clothes were good, and someone had pressed them.

"I planned to kill Agna for a long time. There was a time when for a week I slept with a pistol under my pillow, hoping for the strength to shoot her in her sleep. When I could tell by her breathing that it was time, I'd get up on my elbow and look at her, but I never had the courage to use the pistol on her—no, though I sat up in bed sometimes for half an hour with my finger on the trigger. Something would delay me—our dog would bark, or the kitchen clock would strike, or I would imagine my father shaking his head at me; and once she woke and asked me whether I had locked the porch door.

"Most of that week the room was as bright as morning, because the moon shone in, but as it rose later and hung higher, the room grew dark. And it seemed wrong to shoot Agna in the dark. Then I thought of a better plan."

The courtroom was held as a ball of glass, in which black figures hang in arrested motion. The silence was not vacant, but rich and winey, like a rest in music. It was the rest in the tread of a giant, one step, one step, and men crushed and

powerless. The Judge, the bailiff, the spectators were crushed and powerless, all with staring eyes, and their short breath caught through the mouth. Jens and Agna Jevins, they were known to all, and he so prosperous; and she a small complaining woman, who took prizes, with whom all must have talked on bright mornings, after she had lain asleep, close to death.

"At the south of our lot," Jens Jevins continued, and conversationally, quite quietly, as if he were talking to some surveyors, "there is a long slope and then a pond, where in my father's time they took out clay to make bricks. This place is not fenced; is separated from the highway by a few alders—some of you know," he said, with an air of surprise, remembering the spectators as living beings who had experienced his highway and the sight of his pond. "I would go down there sometimes on spring evenings when the boys were catching frogs, and last week I went down, and they were catching frogs. And it was the night the Alexander boy fell in—well over his head he went, for the pond is above seven feet deep there, and sixteen farther out. I that was standing near was able to seize on him—I mention this because pulling him out put in my head the idea of what to do to Agna.

"So the next night I waited till late and I said to her that we might walk down and watch the boys catch frogs. She was glad to go and mentioned that I didn't often invite her to take evening walks any more, and we went down the slope. But I hadn't waited long enough, the boys were still there. She and I stood on the rim of the pond, and I edged her toward the place where the Alexander boy went in, and saw how easy it would be to send her down and keep her from climbing out. Only the boys were still there.

"It was dusk and the cars from town came down the highway and took the turn beyond our alders, and it looked as if they were all coming straight on to us, till they swung the corner. She says, 'What if one didn't see the turn and came crashing on to us?' and she shivered and said her shoulders were chilly, though the night was warm, and she wanted to go back to the house. So we went back and I read the evening paper aloud, about a young couple that had got married that day at Sun Prairie and had had a great doings. She said she wished we were starting over, and I said 'I don't,' and went to bed.

"But in the night I woke up and thought of what she'd said. What if we were starting over? And if I'd murdered her early, say, on the honeymoon? I saw that I couldn't have done it then. I wondered how I could do it now."

II

Now the Judge found his voice, and leaned down as if he were ill or drunken and said from his throat: "Why did you want to do it?"

Jens Jevins looked astonished. "I didn't *want* to do it," he said, "but there was thirty-seven years of it already and there might be twenty more."

Having answered, he continued:

"I began to see that what wasn't tragedy now would have been tragedy then. I thought of us driving through the country, if we'd been in the days of machines, like the Sun Prairie couple. Agna and me, you understand—and her young again. Her in the same blue dress, in the seat beside me. Me in a new suit, and shoes with the new not off the soles. Us talking and laughing, our valises stowed in the back. Going along the road. Along the road that swung round by our place, and turned the corner by the alder trees. Dark it might be, or maybe a fog would have come down. We'd be talking and laughing, and the road strange, and I'd miss the turn, and the car'd come skimming between the alders, and across the base of the slope, and making for the clay hole. Spite of all I could do, setting the brakes, on it'd come, heading for the clay hole. In the dark or maybe in the fog. And we wouldn't know we'd left the road, till I'd see a light from somewhere lapping on the pond, and then it'd be too late. Straight in and down—in and down. Nothing I could do. Agna in her blue dress. On the day of our wedding.

"But now it was thirty years and past, and twenty more to come. I woke her up. I says, 'I can't sleep. It's warm. Let's go down and walk out somewheres.' She laughed and grumbled some, but she went with me. She was always one to go with me. We put on little and went down the slope to the pond. It was deep dark—the light of a star was deep in the water. We heard the frogs and smelled the first wild grape. I took her to the place where the Alexander boy had slipped in

and where it was hard for anybody to climb out. I wanted a minute. Another car was coming along the road. 'When it turns the corner,' I thought, 'when it turns!' Its lights shone straight and strong, they blinded us, they came on and on, toward us. Agna says, 'It's coming, it's coming! . . .' For the lights made no turn at the corner. The light shot out from the alders. I could hear the talking and laughing in the car. In less than a flash of time, the car shook the ground around us, and went crashing down and down into the deep of the water. But first the lights of the water, or of the dashboard, or of the sky, or of heaven struck full on their faces that were still laughing. Well, there on that seat I tell you I saw me in my wedding suit that was new and beside me Agna, that was young again.

"There was a cry from Agna that was young and from me where I stood—and I saw what I'd done—reached back into the past and killed her that it was tragedy to kill. It was so that it had found me out. God had done it to me—just that way. I see it so. . . . All night I've walked in the woods, waiting for the time to tell. Now you know—now you know."

Jens Jevins stood head down, abruptly distracted, listless. The hundred voices in the room burst their silence. And after the first words, crude and broken, the women were saying: "Walked all night in the woods? But somebody has just pressed his clothes for him!"

Now the sound of running feet and the cries of men reached the room, and as these increased none knew whether to run down in the street or to stay in the courtroom, where Jens Jevins might say something more. But now a great gasping voice cried from the stair: "Car gone into Jevins's clay hole!" . . . and immediately the room was emptied of all but those who must stay, and Jevins, who seemed not to have heard.

As one man, and he breathing his horror, the town of Tarnham ran down the highway, and did not take the turn, but kept straight on and flowed over the green and spangled slope and surrounded the Jevins pond. Some highway men, placing signs, had seen the corner of a top protruding from the water.

And now policemen and firemen were lifting from the water, slowly and with sickening lurchings and saggings, a black coupé, new by the signs, and within it the seated figures of

man and woman. And all about them, on sides and back of the car, were gay ribbon streamers, white and pink, and the lettering said: "Yes, we're just married." And such signs were also pasted in paper, and from them was dangling a water-soaked old shoe. A young chap, he was, with his hands still on the wheel and the emergency brake set, and a rose on his coat lapel; and his young bride, in her neat gown of blue, had her hands folded in her lap, over a little silver bag.

Now the sheriff came leading Jens Jevins and pushed through the crowd, and the people moved respectfully, for the tale of the courtroom had not yet gone about. The sheriff and Jens Jevins went to the two figures, taken from the car and covered on the grass, and Jens said in a loud voice: "There we are!" And now he shouted in agony, "Aгна, Агна! Jens!" and cast himself on the ground beside the two still figures.

III

The people were stupefied, not knowing what to feel, with the men and women from the courtroom murmuring his story. Jens Jevins—and he so prosperous and known to them all.

They had seen him yesterday, buying and selling. Could his wife have been in the car, too—the complaining woman, who took prizes?

No, for here she came walking down the slope from the house, wondering at the crowd gathered about their pond. She looked questioning, in her neat black dress and her striped scarf, and they made way for her; and a neighbour, who had been in the courtroom, cried: "Mrs. Jevins, Mrs. Jevins! The car that you saw last night go into the water had a bride and groom!"

But Агна Jevins said: "What car? I saw no car go into the water."

"What! You were not out here in the night and saw this car?"

"I?" cried Агна Jevins. "I was in bed the whole night, and Jens too. What car?"

They told her. She covered her eyes and said, "God forgive me, I heard a cry and thought of saying so to Jens, but he was sleeping soundly."

Jens and the sheriff moved toward her, and when he came

up to her Jens began speaking softly: "All our friends, Agna, thinking of us through the night. And who could have imagined that we were spending the whole night so, side by side; and with the sunrise, we still so near to each other, saying nothing. Who could have told us in our early youth: 'You will rest on that night in a bed of ooze, and none shall know or care that you lie passionless and forgotten?' Who could have known that our wedding day and our death night would be one, because of a pond beyond alders, pleasant and secured? We have died with our dream and our happiness upon us, neither trouble nor weariness has touched us, nor the slow rust of unending days. I have no need to send you to your death, for we have died in the safety of our youth and not in the deep of days already dead. . . ."

They led him to his house. Weeping, Mrs. Jevins said:

"It must have come on him all of a rush. For I pressed his clothes and got his breakfast and he went out of the house. And nothing had changed."

The legend grew that Jens Jevins had had a vision of that happening of the night and that it had sent him off his head.

HOME IS THE SAILOR

By BILL ADAMS

From Blue Book

I WAS sitting reading in the apprentices' quarters when I first saw him. It was the last night in port; the ship was going to sea in the early morning, and for once I was ready and willing for her to do so. The days of my four-year apprenticeship would soon be over. The three and a half years that lay behind me were none too pleasant to look back upon. She was a hungry ship, and ever since I joined her for my first voyage she had been in the west coast grain trade, making regular passages with general cargo round Cape Horn in June, July, or August, and returning to some European port in the latter part of the Northern winter. I had had my dose of it, and was eagerly looking forward to the end of one more passage, that I might leave her and go up for my second mate's certificate.

I was annoyed to see the youngster come into the half deck, for I had hoped to have the little room to myself for this last voyage. The apprentice with whom I had hitherto shared it had finished his four years and left her.

The newcomer was slight, rather tall and lanky, with dark eyes and straight black hair. His expression was very open and eager. A boy of about seventeen, he looked soft even for a first voyager. His delicate face was pink and clear, his hands white. He looked shy. One could easily see that he was a "gentleman's son." The tip of a white handkerchief showed in his breast pocket. He wore a white collar, white shirt, and dark silk tie. And of course he was dressed in the customary spanking rig of an unsophisticated and unsuspecting green sea apprentice—a double-breasted blue serge suit with two rows of big bright brass buttons, an anchor on each of them. A smart new "badge cap" topped him off—a round blue

cloth cap with a shiny black leather peak and gold chin stay, the company's house flag in the loop of the stay. I could have easily guessed what he afterward told me: he supposed this was to be the rig that he would wear at sea.

"Going to sea with her?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he answered.

"Cut out the 'sir,'" said I, and went back to my reading. I must have looked a bit rough to him, for my old brass buttons were anything but bright, and I'd long ago lost the chin stay from my battered cap.

A longshore porter arrived with the kid's belongings, and I watched from the corner of my eye as he went to arranging them. When he had made up his bed in the bottom bunk with linen sheets, linen pillow case, and two or three fancy blankets, he strung up some photographs on the bulkhead about it—father, mother, and a good-looking sister. That done, he looked about the half deck with evident satisfaction. But when he caught my eye and I asked, "Why don't you hang yourself?" he gazed at me blankly, as though not sure that he had heard aright.

"My name's Chatters," said I. "What's yours?"

"Gillan, sir," he answered. Then, remembering that I had objected to "sir," he added, "Gillan. I beg your pardon."

I laughed. People on windjammers don't go around begging pardons.

"You'd better roll up those fancy sheets and stick 'em in the bottom of your sea chest," I said. "You'll find you can sleep without 'em."

He looked very surprised, and glanced at my own bunk with its rough old blankets thrown back, and a wisp of straw protruding from the edge of my ancient "donkey breakfast" mattress.

Preparing to turn in, I took off my worn apprentice uniform and laid it away in my sea chest, where it would remain until I needed it to go ashore in in 'Frisco. The morrow would be a long day, and I advised the kid to roll in. The last I saw of him before I fell asleep he was carefully folding his brass-bound suit and laying it out on the table.

When I awoke the night watchman was lighting our lamp. Day was just beginning to break. It was cold, and I snuggled down for a last few winks. The new chum turned out and

peered about the half deck as though seeking something. He gave me a long look, but supposing me to be asleep said nothing. I guessed what he was after; he was wondering where to wash his face and hands! Sea apprentices wash once a week at sea: on Saturday evening or on Sunday morning; unless it is bad weather, when such washing as they receive is attended to by the sea on the deck. Fresh water isn't plentiful. We take our fresh-water baths in the equatorial rain squalls.

In a moment the kid was dressing himself in his white shirt, collar, and brassbound suit. When dressed, he made up his bunk, shaking the pillow and straightening the sheets. Then he hurried out to the deck, bright-eyed and plainly much excited.

Someone came bellowing forward. The mate, who had been with her on her last voyage, was a quiet sort of man, the taciturn kind that you find in lots of ships—long ago grown accustomed to taking things as they come. The second mate was new. I had not yet seen him.

I was about to step from the half deck when I heard a shout.

"Get to blazes out o' the glad rags! D'ye think ye're a blasted ornymint?"

As Gillan hurriedly reëntered the half deck, half stepping, half falling over the door coaming, the second mate caught sight of me.

"Down to the locker, the two o' ye, an' look alive!" he growled; then went on forward to rouse out the foremast hands.

Gillan looked at me, speechless. I said, "We've a little job to do. Better get a move on and change into dungarees."

When you read of the sailing of a ship you read of the folks ashore who wave and cheer while the sailors wave and cheer back. Flags fly gaily in the offshore wind. The crew stamps round and round the windlass, singing: "*There's plenty of gold, so I've been told, on the banks of the Sacramento,*" or, "*Waye, aye, you rolling river!*" You never hear tell of the chain locker.

The morning was just opening. Gulls wheeled by. The river glistened. The tugboat lay ahead, waiting till our anchor was aweigh.

The hands at the windlass were rousing up a chantey as I lighted a lantern and led the new chum, now dressed in dun-

garees and a work shirt, below to the 'tween decks. It was dark down there. The singing of the men on the fo'c'sle head grew faint and far away. I wriggled backward through the manhole in the forward bulkhead, and he followed me awkwardly.

It was pitch dark in the chain locker; utterly quiet. There was a stale, dank smell of old rust. We were far below the level of the river.

Passing the new chum a chain hook, I bade him grab hold of the incoming cable and help me flake it down as it clanked in. As he set his chain hook in the chain he looked up to the blackness above, and a dollop of mud fell in his face. Muddy water dripped on him. He was much too uncomfortable, much too perplexed, to ask any questions. The iron chain hook was hurting his hands. I guessed that lacing his own shoe-strings was about the hardest work that he had hitherto done.

When the cable was all in and I led the way back to the deck it was raining. There was no longer any blue sky to be seen. The tugboat had dropped us, and we were on the road to 'Frisco. The shore line, already indistinct, was fast fading. The wind was cold. In oilskins and sea boots the men were hurrying from rope to rope while the second mate bellowed orders. Some were aloft on the yards, loosing sail.

As I hopped into the shrouds to go up and lend a hand on the main I had a good look at the second mate. He was a big, shock-headed, bulgy-eyed man, and although without oilskins or sea boots and already wet through was apparently quite unconscious of either cold or wet. Catching sight of the new chum he shouted to Gillan to jump aloft; but after watching his clumsy efforts to get into the rigging bawled, "Get down! Get down! Ye'll break yer blasted neck!" He pointed Gillan to where the men were hauling out on the topsail chain sheets, and bade him lay back with them.

The rain came down harder; the wind piped up. She began to roll a little. By the time I came down from aloft she was lying over, tossing up a smother at her bow. The new chum was wet through and shivering. His palms were badly blistered. I, too, was wet through, of course. But I was well used to that.

At close to eight bells, breakfast time, I was working beside the new chum. "Hungry?" I asked. I knew well enough he was hungry. He was almost everything that was miserable—but not quite everything as yet. And she was rolling so now

that he couldn't stand without holding on to something.

When he followed me to the half deck at eight bells I saw that his brassbound suit had fallen to the deck, and I picked it up and tossed it into his bunk.

"You'll want that when you go ashore in 'Frisco," I told him. He didn't hear me. He had dropped to a seat on his sea chest.

For breakfast there was of course the usual thing—hard-tack and strong bitter coffee. Sorry for the kid, I poured him a pannikin full.

"Drink hearty," said I. "You've four giddy years of it ahead."

He lifted the pannikin and tried to drink. But he'd been accustomed to good coffee, with sugar and cream in it. His face turned suddenly green, and he rose and hurried to the deck. When he came back the rain was driving down in sheets. At my advice he managed to change into dry things and to get into his oilskins and sea boots. His oilskins were good. But someone had sold him a pair of felt-lined sea boots—once wet, never dry—articles of use, perhaps, to steamer men or yachtsmen, who do not often get their sea boots full of water. Too seasick to attempt to eat, he crept into his bunk, his brassbound suit crumpled beneath him.

In ten minutes or so the second mate appeared and ordered us out. By now the seas were lopping in over her bulwarks and water flowed to and fro with every roll.

"You'll soon get used to it," I told the kid. "The first year's the worst." Tailing on to a rope beside him, I showed him how to use his weight. "It won't be so hard on your hands if you use your weight right. There's a right way and a wrong way of pulling on a rope," I said.

He looked at me gratefully. His body was now protected from the wind by the new oilskins, so that he was hot instead of cold. His pale face was sweaty. But as we gave her more sail she grew wetter and before long he was knocked down and bowled over by a sea, and so was wet through again.

Hour after weary hour went by, every minute one of acute discomfort. The shore was long lost to view. A gray rain-hid sea tossed all about.

The carpenter looked from his shop door and called to the second mate, "She's getting a good start, Mister."

"Aye," replied the second, knee deep in white water. "Five months o' this an' we'll see . . . 'Frisco."

When we went below for a rest at noon the seasickness was scared out of the lad and he was ravenously hungry. There was hardtack and a hunk of fatty pork for dinner. He gulped down his share of the pork, tried to nibble a pantile, and crawled into his bunk. I had to shout and to shake him to awaken him when the turn-to bell struck at one o'clock.

Afternoon passed as the forenoon had passed. I was at the wheel, and saw him from time to time, floundering about the watery decks at the heels of the men, or helplessly clinging to a hand rail in the swirl of white water. It was six o'clock before we were below again. Hardtack and skilly for supper. The latter, though supposed to be tea, bore slight resemblance to tea. The new chum drank a pannikin of skilly, ate a couple of pantiles, and once more made for his bunk. The wind howled, the sea roared, but he knew nothing of them.

While the kid slept the second mate came into the half deck and asked me for a fill of 'baccy. "'Bout out of your time, ain't you?" he asked me. He had seen that I was no green hand. I saw that for all his noise and bluster he had a kindly eye. There was no bully about him. He was merely a sailing-ship second mate who when there was work to be done liked to have it done and be through with it. When he rose to go he stopped by the new chum's bunk, and fingering a corner of a linen sheet shook his head unbelievably.

When I roused the kid at eight bells, two hours later, wind and sea were gone down, and the ship was riding easy with a slow gentle roll. The night was very dark and a light steady rain was falling. I took him to the quarter deck where, by the light of a lantern, the mates were picking the men into two watches. That done and the wheel relieved, the second mate called to Gillan, "Get up to the poop and keep the time!"

Remembering my own first night at sea, I felt sorry for the new chum. Having to watch the clock and strike the bell every half hour there would be no chance for him to snatch sleep. Should he happen to snooze, so that the bell was not struck and the man at the wheel not relieved on the tick of ten o'clock, not the second mate only, but the men, too, would be growling at him.

He struck the bell all right till nine-thirty. It was my wheel

at ten, and I went up a minute or two ahead of time, in case he should be asleep. Asleep he was, on his feet, his head tucked down in his breast. Water dripped on him from the spanker, but he was unaware of it. I woke him, and as he went to strike four bells I heard the water squelching in his sea boots. It was very cold.

Until midnight he leaned against the wheel box behind me and snoozed. Whenever I thought it about time to strike the bell I poked him with the toe of my boot.

At midnight we went below to the half deck together. Probably no featherbed had ever seemed so good to him as that narrow little bunk had now become.

When the second mate's watch was roused out again at four of the morning and he had to go back to the poop to keep the time till beginning of the day's work at five o'clock, he could hardly keep his eyes open. His fingers trembled as he slowly dressed. The linings of his sea boots were sodden. He gasped as he put his bunk-warmed feet down into them.

I didn't see him again till breakfast time. Then, when I entered the half deck, he was folding his brassbound suit and laying it away in the bottom of his sea chest. He didn't ask any questions.

Days and nights passed. Night after night he huddled on the poop, keeping the time. Day by day in his watch on deck he worked at dull jobs: polishing brasswork and binnacles over and over till they shone like mirrors. Hour after hour, kneeling on the hard deck, he chipped rust from bolts and bollards. Always when his time came to go off duty he crawled into his bunk to be dead to the world for the brief three and three quarters hours of a sailing-ship sailor's watch below. In the dog watches of an evening, busily preparing for my second mate's examination, I had small time to notice or to talk with him.

Disconsolate and solitary as the new chum was, he began to harden. His blistered hands healed slowly. The skin on his palms and fingers grew tougher. Forced to it by the unceasing invective of the second mate, he learned to walk and to run without holding on, and became accustomed to the clumsy weight of oilskins and sea boots. Lean as he had been when he first came aboard, he was leaner now. The brightness was gone from his eyes; the expectancy passed. Always too tired,

too wretched for thought, he was frequently bowled over and soaked to the bone by boarding seas.

For two weeks we sailed rough waters beneath a cloud-billowed sky. The lad's fancy blankets were salty and damp; his linen sheets had been put away. When occasionally one or other of the mates dropped in to the half deck of an evening, and, bending over my shoulder, helped me with "day's work" and "longitude by chronometer" problems, neither of them spoke to or noticed Gillan.

By and by the sun came out and the sea shone blue. Wet clothing was hung to dry. Men with worn oilskins begged the mate for a little linseed oil to dress them with. Sea boots were given a dressing of dubbin.

One of the foremost hands who had an old and leaky pair of sea boots saw the new chum's felt-lined boots laid out to dry in the sun and offered a trade.

"I'll give ye a week's whack o' pork for them boots," he said.

Gillan, always hungry, made the trade, and thereafter for a week had a double whack of pork at dinnertime. When the week was gone he was hungrier than ever and took to hanging around the galley door in the dog watch, hoping for scraps from the cook. I warned him that he'd find himself in trouble if the skipper saw him sponging on the cook, but my warning was futile. So one evening the skipper saw him eating cabin scraps by the galley door, and from then on he found himself kept at work in the dog watch every evening for a week. The men snickered at sight of the kid chipping iron rust and polishing brass long after the sun was gone.

"Well, I warned you, didn't I?" I said. He made no reply, but I saw a momentary new expression come to his face. Hot, angry sparks awakened in his eyes.

After the dog watch was his own again he tightened his belt and kept away from the galley. The pinkness was gone from his cheeks. His hands were stained and grimy. Often there was a queer, far-away look to him. He spoke only when spoken to. The shyness that had been so noticeable when first I saw him was still there. Looking back, I remember a sort of dignity in that shyness.

I worked with the foremost sailors, all of whom were busied in the rigging, reeving, splicing, and getting everything in

trim for the Southern latitudes. Ignorant of all sailor work, the new chum was kept at his chipping and polishing, working all alone.

Leaving the trade winds astern, we ran into blowy latitudes again, and, with no sea boots now, Gillan's feet were always wet. The fellow who had traded for his felt-lined boots had ripped the linings out and went dry shod.

"Where's your sea boots?" the second mate asked him; and, hearing that he had traded them for food, told him that he was a young fool and must take his medicine.

"The skipper's got sea boots in the slop chest. He'll sell you a pair," I told him. Evidently remembering the time when the skipper had seen him accepting scraps from the cook, he reddened and made no answer.

One evening shortly afterward a stiff squall caught her just after nightfall, and all hands were called to shorten sail in a hurry. Gillan and I climbed to the main royal. No sound reached us but the sound of wind and sea as we swung up the rolling rigging. He had never been aloft, never been off the deck before. The moon beamed on roaring waters.

When I had secured my own side of the sail I went over to help him.

"How d'you like *sailing*?" I shouted.

His eyes very bright, he glanced at me from amid folds of white billowing canvas. His cap had blown away and the wind tossed his black hair about his pale forehead. He made no reply, but while I passed the gaskets and lashed down the sail he stood erect on the foot rope and gazed up to the full round moon above us. His lips were parted. His face delighted and eager, he drank deep of the crisp wind.

When I came down into the topmast rigging he was still standing at the royal mast head, gazing now skyward, now to the glistening crested seas almost two hundred feet below.

The second mate looked up from the topsail yard.

"D'ye think ye're a blasted ornymint?" he bellowed.

His sensitive face white, his eyes gone dull, the new chum came into the half deck looking as though someone had struck him. The blustering ways of second mates had never troubled me. To me, long ago disillusioned, the sea was merely a means to a living. Nothing more.

"It's no use to carry a grouch," I told him, and added, "You

can swallow the anchor when she gets in if you want to."

"What's that?" he asked, frowning.

"Skip," said I. "Desert. Run away. Lots of us do."

As I brought out my navigation books I said, "When I came to sea I supposed that all I'd have to do would be to walk up and down in my brass buttons with a big telescope under my arm."

He made no answer, and I went to my reading and figures.

He had taken off his boots and was chafing his cold feet with equally cold hands.

"See here, kid," I said, "you can't go around the corner without any sea boots."

As though he had not heard me, he remarked, "I thought that too."

"Thought what?" I asked.

"About the brass buttons and the telescope," he answered.

"Lots of us do," I replied, laughing. "I don't know who started the idea."

"*They* thought it too," said he, and nodded to the pictures of his people.

"You'd better go ask the skipper for a pair of sea boots," I said.

"I won't!" he snapped, the angry sparks awakening in his eyes again.

I shrugged my shoulders; I wasn't the little beggar's keeper.

The big winds blew unceasingly. Each day was drearier than the last. The weather was too wild for chipping iron rust or polishing brasswork now. Seas slapped their crests across the bulwarks. Her head sails dripped. Lifelines were stretched from fo'c'sle to poop, and all hands were set to making ro-bands and chafing mats beneath the cold shelter of the fo'c'sle head. The men talked of stormy latitudes ahead, and spoke of missing ships, and ice on wintry seas.

"Here's him as'll not take no more voyages to sea, I'll bet," said one, turning to the new chum. They snickered at the new chum, while day after day the rain and sleet drove down. . . .

There came a still day when the large slow-floating snow-flakes fell, and men with blue noses stamped their feet and beat numb hands upon their oilskins. The second mate bawled:

"Get them brooms along now! Shovel the snow off her!"

The kid's teeth chattered as he flung snow over the bulwarks. No sail flapped. No block creaked. Monotonous mutterings came from the men. Now and again, with a great beating of many-jointed wings, a bird rose from the dark water, flew a little way, and settled with a splash. The second mate, petting the ship's dog in the chartroom doorway, saw Gillan watching the birds. The kid's face was rapt—everything forgotten but the great white birds.

"Get the snow off her!" shouted the second. "D'ye think this is a blasted picnic?"

The sleek dog came from the chartroom and strolled about the poop, indifferent eyes upon the new chum as it passed him.

The skipper came from the cabin and called to the steward on the quarter deck, "Fix a good supper for old Ranzo, steward! It's hard weather on a dog." He noticed the kid, and reëntered the cabin, to be back in a moment with a pair of sea boots.

"Here, you, boy!" he called, and tossing the sea boots to the deck returned below.

Gillan's blue lips were voiceless as he picked up the sea boots. A tantalizing smell of hot food came from the pantry. Whining and wagging its tail, the dog passed down the companion ladder to the saloon where mate and skipper sat down to their suppers.

It was almost dark. Now and again a bird cry broke the silence.

When we went to the half deck for our supper of hardtack and skilly there was a sound as of many cattle lowing far away and coming slowly nearer. We were eating our hardtack and sipping the thin hot skilly when the wind caught her.

From that night on there was small time for talk or for books of an evening. There was no roband making by day. In brief lulls of almost ceaseless storm we snatched what sleep we might. Again and again rang the order, "*All hands on deck!*" Again and again at the changing of the watches one or other of the mates called, "Turn in all standing! Keep handy the watch!" Time after time we turned in "all standing"; sleeping in our oilskins and sea boots, lest a sudden call come. After a week of steady gales two of the crew laid up, and,

moaning in their bunks, feigned sickness to escape the misery of the deck.

Aloft in furious days and hooting midnights, cold and wet were the unremitting round of all but the two malingerers. Rope-toughened skin on palms split open. Finger joints cracked, the red flesh showing at the bottom of the cracks. For want of anything better we rubbed pork grease on our "sea cuts." I taught the new chum to tie rope yarns round his wrists and waist and ankles—"soul and body lashings"—to help keep the flooding water out. But still he was always wet. Salt-water boils swelled on his wrists, just where the chafe of the cold stiff oilskin came. "Wait till you get 'em on your knees," said I. For I was limping. Our bedding was wet, our mattresses mouldering; the great seas swamped in whenever a door was opened for the fraction of a moment. There were days when we must do without our coffee or our skilly. Days when the sole food available was hardtack.

How Gillan managed to exist during the three full weeks we spent in beating round the corner I don't know. One looked after one's self. Often I caught glimpses of him clinging to the lifelines, waist deep in white smother. Once I saw one of the crew jerk him from the onrush of a sea just in time to save him from being swept overboard.

The second mate had no time to notice the new chum now. Had he stayed in his bunk no one would have cared or have missed him. But again and again I found him beside me, aloft on racking topsail yards where none but tried men could be of any use. His lips numb, his face ghostly white, his bruised knuckles raw and red, he did his best at fisting frozen canvas with the rest of us. . . .

When misery was become well-nigh our second nature, there came at last a clear morning with a light wind from the south. She was past the corner! By breakfast-time we had given her full sail, for the first time in over a month. Countless birds about her, she lifted to the gentle undulations of a southerly swell. The word went round that there would be no work that day.

Some of the men were watching the birds. Some hung wet clothes to dry. I was seated on the hatch, Gillan beside me washing his salt-water boils in a pannikin of fresh water, when the second mate passed by.

I guessed his errand, for on his face was such a contemptuous scowl as he had never worn when savage winds were choking and wintry waters pounding him. A moment after he had entered the fo'c'sle the two malingerers were hurled from it and fell sprawling to the deck. They were speedily booted to their feet. His sea-split hands clamped about their necks. Barefooted, bareheaded, dressed in their underclothing only, their eyes bulging, their lips whimpering, he pushed them before him with extended arms and so brought them to the cabin door. Presently they returned forward and slunk into the fo'c'sle, their rating reduced from "able-bodied" to "ordinary" seamen, their pay cut down.

The crew were gathered by the fo'c'sle door, jeering the malingerers, when the second mate once more came forward. Stopping in front of Gillan, he looked at the new chum's miserable hands.

"How d'ye like the sea?" he asked. Before the kid could answer the second turned to me.

"The skipper wants ye aft," said he.

My sea cuts and salt-water boils were instantly forgotten, for now I remembered that this was the day on which my four-year apprenticeship was over. The second mate strolled after me as I made haste toward the cabin door.

I left the cabin gleefully. The mates were talking by the quarter rail, and I told them that the skipper had signed me on as third and had told me to bring my things aft. Henceforth I was to share the second mate's room, eat at the cabin table, and draw pay.

My first job as third mate was to order the malingerers from the fo'c'sle and set them to work upon their hands and knees scouring the decks where constant inflooding water had caused the slippery green sea growths to obtain a hold. Hate me as they might, they dared not grumble. While no one else worked that day, they pushed flat sandstones to and fro, bucket of water beside each of them to keep the stones wet.

While the second mate and I were seated together on the after hatch Gillan passed by. I was removing the old apprentice buttons from my shore-going jacket.

"Four giddy years and you can do the same," I said as the new chum glanced at me.

"I'll bet ye dollars to doughnuts he swallows the anchor,"

muttered the second mate; the kid, overhearing the words, blushed crimson.

Next day the crew were set to sailor work in the rigging. But the new chum was given a bucket of water and a holystone and put to scouring the deck beside the two malingerers. They knelt in a row together.

Working in contented twos and threes, the sailors talked while they worked. When none of the mates were near the two malingerers muttered to each other, cursing the mates and ship, and leering at Gillan.

"You was a blasted fool to go to sea, wasn't you, puppy?" said one.

Gillan pretended not to hear. The fellows swore at him and taunted him, sneering at him because the sandstone pained his split hands. He took no notice of them.

While everyone else's hands healed the new chum's hands remained sore—chafed by the stone and continually dipped in salt water. Day by day the malingerers jeered him, calling him foul names, and damning him as one who in days to come would be an officer.

Weeks passed. We picked up a warm southeast trade wind. All but the three holystoners were busy painting the ship. We were counting the days to 'Frisco.

Evening by evening I worked at my navigation problems in the room I shared with the second. The new chum dwelt alone in the half deck, with his salt pork, hardtack, bitter coffee, and thin brown skilly. And the pictures of his people hung on the bulkhead.

On a warm Sunday such of the crew as possessed any brought out their shore-going clothes to give them an airing.

Gillan was hanging his brassbound suit to air as I passed.

"Going to wear 'em when she gets in?" I asked.

He understood my meaning—knew that I was wondering whether he had made up his mind to swallow the anchor. His lips parted, he turned sharply round, as though about to speak. But he was silent. I saw sparks waken in his dark eyes once more.

As I strolled away to my room the two malingerers came from the fo'c'sle, and, seeing the new chum brushing his brassbound jacket, nudged each other.

In the second dog watch that day the second told me to get

the kid to the wheel and show him how to steer. I found him in the half deck, seated at the table, with paper before him and pen in hand. We should be in in a few weeks, and he was writing home—to the people whose pictures smiled on us from the bulkhead. I wondered of what miseries he was telling. The men were singing in the fo’c’sle as he followed me aft. The malingerers walked the fore deck together. The mates sat talking quietly on the after hatch. The sleek dog dozed near by.

With a soft beam wind just keeping her sails full, she scarcely needed steering, and I left her to him. The rosy sunset shone on his thin white face. The sails glowed above him; the sea glowed below. The second mate called up to me where I sat on the taffrail: “It won’t be long now till we take a walk ashore!”

The sun went down. The sea rippled and sang under her counter, beneath her helmsman’s feet. The moon rose in the gloomy east. Stars winked amid slow-moving little clouds.

His hands on her wheel spokes, the binnacle light shining on his down-bent face, the new chum seemed almost a spectral boy.

I was standing at the door of the carpenter’s shop talking with Chips, when the new chum was relieved and went forward. The moon shone bright on deckhouse and on deck. A murmur of talk and snatches of laughter came from the fo’c’sle.

As Gillan passed me I heard a harsh laugh on the fore deck. A sneering voice said, “Ye looks as good in ’em as the puppy’ll ever look!”

The new chum started, then stopped. For an instant he stood still. As he sprang forward I followed.

Beside the hatch stood one of the malingerers with Gillan’s brassbound jacket on. Catching sight of Gillan, he threw the jacket off and tossed it to him.

“’Ere, puppy!” he sneered.

The jacket fell to the deck. It was I who picked it up. As I did so I heard the sharp click of a fist upon bone. The fellow who had been wearing the jacket snapped out a foul oath.

The crew came streaming from the fo’c’sle. Chips hurried from his shop, the cook from his galley. Gillan was on his back on the deck, but for an instant only.

As the new chum staggered backward and went down again, the second mate strode up.

"Back—back, all hands!" he ordered.

A cry of delight came from the crew as the new chum, head down and shoulders hunched, leaped for his antagonist. But as the fellow's fist beat the youngster down for a third time they made as though to close in. Growling, "*Back! Back! Back!*" the second mate flung them away.

The malingerer glanced quickly round the circle of onlookers. His lip was bleeding, and as Gillan rose once more he backed, shifty-eyed, to the bulwarks behind him. The new chum's face was the colour of chalk. Sparks blazed in his eyes.

A knife flashed in the moonlight. A yell rose from the men. But the second mate's hand clamped on the malingerer's wrist and the blade whirled overboard.

"Back! All hands stand back!" ordered the second, and waved the incrowding onlookers away.

Ducking his head and throwing his arms up wildly, the fellow sought ineffectually to guard himself. A hoot of laughter rose. His hands upheld before his frightened face, he leaped away from Gillan, blundered blindly through the cheering crew, and was gone, followed by a bellow of laughter and oaths.

For an instant Gillan stood white and panting, the men about him, the second mate's approving hand upon his shoulder. . . .

The moon went out. A squall piped through the rigging. Dimly seen sails bellied drum-tight, and as the ship reeled down the mate's and skipper's voices rang above the sudden tumult. All hands ran to the gear. While the ship raced toward 'Frisco we lowered and clued up sail, shortening her down in a hurry as squall upon staggering squall burst upon her.

Men who swung upon the foot ropes gathering in her canvas shouted jocosely to one another, jesting of the fight. Snatches of laughter sounded from the swaying spars.

Cloud fringes parted, and the moon rode out. The sea twinkled and shimmered, high crests snowy, curves molten, hollows cavern-inky.

Jesting as they descended toward the deck, the men in the main topmast rigging cried up to Gillan above them, telling him he'd make a bucko mate some day—calling him "*sailor*." They told me afterward how his face shone, how his dark eyes danced.

At the moment that the new chum was coming down over the futtock shrouds the second mate looked up and saw a gasket hanging loose upon the lee main yard.

"One o' you sailors lay out on the main yard an' make that gasket up," he shouted.

A fresh squall smothered the moon. Sea and sky were darkened. Laughter and cheers were mingled with the night's roar.

The second mate's watch went below, the mate's men to coiling up the tangled ropes. As the full force of the wind took her and she lay far over, spray flying thick and her lee bulwark down in the water, I went to my room.

I had kicked off my boots and was half undressed when a wild cry from the dark deck beside the lee main braces startled me. As man after man took up and repeated that cry I burst through the alleyway door and sprang half naked to the night again. The wind howled. Battering seas smashed on her hidden hatches. Sheets of invisible water flew over ship and crew. Voices were drowned. Ripped from its bolt ropes, I heard a sail whip into ribbons high above me. Chains clattered on the metal masts. Wind upon wind. Water waist deep, shoulder high. Confusion. Skipper, mates, and sailors, impotent to save. It was no night to put a boat out!

The squall passed. Cloud fringes parted and the moon broke out. The sea twinkled and shimmered, its high crests snowy, its curves molten, its hollows cavern-inky.

Morning opened clear. Full sail by breakfast time, the ship racing for port.

The mate beckoned me, and together we went to the half deck to gather the new chum's belongings. His oilskins swung on their hook. Fallen to the deck, his pannikin rolled to and fro. A letter lay upon the little table. From the bulkhead above his fancy blankets his people smiled on us.

We took his oilskins down and rolled his blankets. We laid

his people's pictures where they could not see us, within his sea chest on his gay brass-buttoned suit. The second mate came in as we were done.

The mate picked up the unsealed letter. The same thought was in the mind of each of us: The tale of all his misery would be there; hunger and cold, and three hard, heedless men. Either one of us, all of us, might have made the misery less!

The second mate and I looked at the mate; he gazed back at us.

"*You*," he muttered, and thrust the letter toward me.

I read, aloud at first—then scarce whispering: . . . "They say the first year is the hardest. *It is not hard*. . . I'll soon be home."

NEVER IN THIS WORLD

By STEPHEN MOREHOUSE AVERY

From Collier's

WOVEN into the high green background of Connecticut meadows, a bright strand of road mounted between low gray walls of piled field stones. Sections of the wall were blanketed with climbing roses, and an offshore breeze, braced with salt, bore also a moist fragrance of the earth itself, for it was that time of year and it was morning. Farther on up the rise a very tiny girl, perched atop the wall, made a bluer spot against the blue sky, and a black spot, zigzagging aimlessly in the road as he climbed toward her, was a very small venturing boy.

The tiny girl watched his approach with her head cocked alertly, her flying hair swarming with sunbeams, a tuneless, speculative child's hum on her lips, until finally he stopped in the road opposite and stared at her with an unabashed, brown-eyed fixity which meant that she was something to be examined, judged, and rated against other strange discoveries.

As for him, he was not strange. He was just a sturdy little lad in improvised pants, scuffed shoes, and a cap which was yanked so askew over his eyes that he had to tilt back his head to see her. Presently an impulse of male initiative emerged from his uncertainty. With a thrust of his chunky arms deep into his pants pockets, he said, "Want to race?"

That was by way of testing her reality. Little girls, according to his standard, never had front teeth, always wore rubber bands around their bobtails of straight hair, and spent their whole lives teasing, tattling, bawling, and asking for your candy—if you had any. But this one was more like the picture on the cover of Tommy Wilcox's bedtime storybook, and her first remark made him wonder if she weren't lost out of there.

"Paul doesn't allow me to race," she said, "not since I fell asleep chasing Mr. Red Top. That's the clover fairy."

The small boy thought it all over and then with subtle relevancy said, "I'm seven."

But she only smiled happily and turned her blue-eyed, shell-clear bit of a face to the breeze so that her glinting hair blew. "Soon I'll be grown up too. I'm as good as five. What's your name?"

He scowled but told her: "It's Benny."

"Benny what?"

"Benny Trout. What's yours?"

"Mine's Susan." She laughed gaily in a high little glee.

"Susan what?"

"Susan Dodd." She evidently thought names were fun. "Paul Vane Dodd is *my* dad," she went on. "We live in that white house down there where my finger points. No, this finger. I have a puppy named Twinkle, but he is not so well to-day. I call *my* dad Paul."

"I got a ma," said Benny. He went over and sat in the grass at her feet, adding with a faint swagger, "I just call her ma."

"What do mas do, Benny?" Susan hopped down in the grass beside him like a flitting bird.

"Well," began Benny, feeling more comfortable in the position of an authority, "mas scrub you in the tub and tie knots in strings and give you a nickel. They always say you're filthy, but if you get a pain they rub it."

"Is that all?" Susan was apparently both surprised and relieved. "My Paul does all that. I'd much rather have Paul. You keep your ma, Benny, and I'll keep Paul." Her attention went suddenly to a blue jay which alighted on the wall a few yards away, and she called to it and beckoned it with both hands. But the blue jay didn't come.

Benny scrambled indignantly to his feet. "Blue jays can't talk. I go to school," he said flatly.

"I went to Sunday school once," put in Susan quickly, making a new bid for his interest. "They told an ugly story about a man who was going to kill his little boy and burn him up, but he did it to a ram instead. Paul told two whole new a'ventures of Princess Susanna—that's really me—and the Purple-Hooded Prince that night so I could forget about it."

Hand in hand they crossed the field toward her white house. "We do too have a picture of the Purple-Hooded Prince," said Susan. "And this is the field where I chased Mr. Red Top, who was riding a big yellow butterfly. Away over to that wall I chased him, and then I fell asleep, and Paul found me and carried me home and said: 'Susan, you must not race.' Do you really need to race, Benny?"

Behind a desolate salt-marsh border which separates it from the Sound the village of North Mercer huddles its quaint white cottages in the shades of old elms. The New York, New Haven & Hartford rockets through North Mercer without stopping, and a stream of motors on the Boston Post passes through without halt and, for the Wilcoxes, Ripleys, Bromleys, Towsons, Trouts, who have spent two and a half centuries there, time also has passed down the quiet main street without any real effect.

Motors, movies, radios, magazines have made no difference. North Mercer has an attitude toward all those modern things—just as it has an attitude toward occasional "outsiders," such as that little Mr. Dodd and his child, who with a look of pale city bewilderment come there to catch a few years' breath and be wondered and talked about and suspected until they finally disappear and are forgotten by the Wilcoxes and Bromleys and Trouts. For who in this world, the world of North Mercer, were the Dodds?

True enough, Paul Vane Dodd, as his name appeared on a few unknown, large-print four-colour books of child tales and as author of infrequent and inept things in minor magazines, was no one of importance in any world. He and his little girl—in spite of rumours, one assumed the man's wife was not living—had occupied the old Ripley house in the high meadows for the past three years, and until old Dr. Towson, who went there regularly every week, let slip something which coloured their quiet, isolated life with a journalistic suspense, they were left to themselves.

Afterward, little Mr. Dodd's slight figure, his blond, young-looking, but serious face, was watched eagerly for indications. His habit of standing on the station platform when the New York trains went through, his smiling, undismayed receipt of flat brown manuscript envelopes at the post office, his once-a-week drives with his small daughter in an ancient automo-

bile which Bromley's garage had for hire—all were observed and weighed as evidence. Dodd and his daughter were said to be very gay on those drives around the countryside, and everybody admitted the child was beautiful, so beautiful that they didn't see how little Dodd could be her father, although he was, and they surmised that the little girl's mother must have been at least a great beauty—and their surmise was correct.

So the weeks of summer drifted by, like the serene passage of white clouds across the blue. Near the post-office door Esther Trout and Martha Towson, the doctor's sister, dropped their market talk and leaned closer together when little Mr. Dodd, nodding pleasantly, stepped by them on the way inside for his mail. "Queer about those Dodds, no trade or business, just mailing and getting back envelopes. Who knows but what his wife ran off with somebody? That's the way with New York folks. You'd think he'd be worried if what they say——"

"It's true," said Martha Towson. "My brother, Dr. Fred, says that much. Maybe Dodd just doesn't care. Doesn't even go to church, does he?"

Mrs. Trout's eager interest flared in her thin, colourless face. "No, he doesn't. And the little girl doesn't go to Sunday school either. The thing that worries me is my little Benny gettin' his young head full of the fairy nonsense they talk. It's been goin' on all summer, and yesterday he came home and told me that whereas he appeared to be little Benny Trout he was in reality none other than Prince Benjamin of the Magic Mud. He said the magic mud was to be found in the hollow below Dodd's house, that little Susan Dodd believes she actually is a fairy and pretends she can talk to blue jays and frogs and squirrels. The idea! Well, I won't have my Benny talkin' to a squirrel, and that's all there is to that."

"Well, the Reverend Ripley went to see Dodd about it once," said Martha Towson. "Did no good. Seems to me a real minister could have done something."

A younger woman, dark and with some sort of steady heat behind her half-shut eyes, stood near them, near enough to overhear. Her hands kept gripping and relaxing as though the emptiness of being a widow and childless at thirty-five hurt her with a physical pain. She watched the post-office door until Dodd came out with another flat brown envelope, and

then she fell into step beside him. "I've baked the cake, Mr. Dodd," she said: "the orange cake you asked for."

He glanced at her vaguely. "That's very nice." And then, as if recalling his mind from distant thoughts: "Did I ask you to bake a cake, Mrs. Wilcox? Well, I probably did."

When he began fumbling in his pockets, she said: "Oh, you mustn't pay me. The cake is for Susan. I'll bring it over. How is the cook I found for you working out?"

"Very well," he said. "I meant to thank you. Or did I thank you before?" His thoughts had fled again, and he did not even hear her suggestion that if Susan's little dresses needed any mending . . .

At the corner he glanced at his watch, bowed, and left her, turning down the short side street which led to the station. The 10:12 for New York was due.

He leaned against a battered trunk on the long platform, waiting for the train, while his gaze followed the bright threads of the rails southwestward out of sight, and his imagination, like an electric current, followed them to their end amid the hazy towers and the vital, clamorous thoroughfares of Manhattan. It was still, after his years of it, the distant vista of his dreaming youth against the rich mothering soil of Illinois, and the fact that its stone had proved too crushing a weight for his slender shoulders did not destroy its poetic allure.

Paul Dodd blamed himself, for he had bungled. And New York had rolled over him as it rolls over its thousands who go back West or who, bereft even of that courage, retreat beyond the sound of battle deep into Jersey or to the meadows of Connecticut, where their place of destiny is at least no more distant than a fancied horizon. And so the fairyland vistas of the towers and parades with which Paul Dodd filled Susan's wide eyes, the Marvellous City of the Purple-Hooded Prince, came to resemble strangely the evening loom of the Plaza across the end of Central Park, the glistening pinnacle of the Ritz Towers in a morning sky, the multi-coloured, buoyant throng of an upper Avenue noon.

The train crashed down, grinding past the trembling platform, drawing a line of blurred faces in the long rectangle of windows. One face, emerging for the fraction of a second, made Dodd lean suddenly forward. But he subsided again. How

often, when he used to wander Madison Avenue and the East Forties, he had glimpsed faces which for an instant he'd thought were—— Well, none of them were. He had bungled that too.

It had been Paul Dodd's life, it seemed, to be given jobs he could not quite do. A friendly editor had told him once: "You've got no iron in you, Dodd. You always waver. It ruins your work and—probably your life." Yes, his career had gone, all but the dregs of it, and Susan's mother had gone because there too his craftsmanship had failed. Somewhere along the line he had always bungled. And now there was only Susan, and he wouldn't have the chance to bungle things with her.

At the curb in front of the corner drug store Dr. Towson hailed him, the old man's brooding, deeply lined face peering out from under the top of his runabout. "Just on my way over to your house, Dodd. Want to come along?"

They drove down Mercer Street, through Shore Lane, across the New Haven Pike, and finally up the hill road where Dodd's small house stood white and clear against the meadow green. "This isn't your regular day to come, is it, Doctor?"

When they stopped at the gate a shrill piped welcome came down the wind: a tiny pink Susan and yelping, circling Tinkle, who was apparently better, had spotted their arrival from the hilltop field and started for the house. They came slowly, Susan barely skipping, remembering that she must not race.

Dr. Towson followed Dodd into his study. There was a large, flat-top desk, shelves of books, one whole row taken up by heavy medical volumes dealing with disorders of the heart. The desk was piled with manuscripts, and another neatly typed stack of sheets contained the tales he told to Susan at bedtime. She insisted upon exact repetition, and it had been necessary to write the stories out. Also, there were pipes and cigarettes and a photograph which, except for the eyes, explained why Susan was pretty. But there was a misty blue distance in Susan's eyes which did not appear in the photograph. They came from somebody else.

When they were seated Dodd said: "All right now, Doctor. What is it?"

The doctor looked up out of his thought. He liked little Dodd. Years ago he himself had started out to be a New York doctor. Things had gone wrong. "Well, it's just that I think

we ought to get a specialist up here at once. I know you had Barnes, but he only confirmed my opinion. Let's try to get someone who won't—because she's getting worse, Dodd. Much worse. From the tests I made last week I'm amazed that it has gone on at all."

Paul Dodd's gaze fell. "Well, that is only what we've known all along," he said. "Sometimes I think she's getting better, but—you must be right. I'm ready, I guess."

"It's because I think you're not ready, Dodd, that I'm warning you now. What are you going to do? Afterward, I mean?"

The little man's eyes burned with an intense blue light. "That depends," he said. "When I first found out about Susan, several years ago, I couldn't understand why she had been put into the world at all. Little children are not always happy. This is not what you would call a little child's world. And so I started out to make a little child's world for Susan."

Dr. Towson took off his spectacles and wiped them with his handkerchief. "Guess you can't do that, Dodd. Pretty hard job to make a world of any kind."

"Yes," said Dodd. "It is hard. You've got to have lots of iron in you to do a job like that. It would be an easy job to—bungle."

"You don't want a specialist, then? We could get Harvey Preston for about five hundred. Just to be sure."

"Of course I want to be sure," said Dodd. "He wouldn't come for two hundred? I've got two hundred."

"I'll tell you," said the doctor, rising, "Preston is the right sort. You give me the two hundred and I'll see if I can get him." He walked slowly down the path, with Susan holding on to his finger, and climbed into his battered runabout that was to have been turned in on a new runabout soon. It wasn't necessary, though. As a matter of fact, he was rather attached to the little old car.

Susan returned to the porch. "I thought it was my doctor day," she said. "But he said he didn't have to hear me breathe because it wasn't."

Leaning against the door jamb, Dodd smiled. "No, I think this is the day we go driving to the Chocolate Tree. We'll have an extra driving day this week."

Susan jumped up and down with excitement. "Will the Chocolate Tree be sprouting caramels, Paul?"

"Why not?" said her father.

"And can Twinkle go too? Because my Doctor says my Twinkle is just as well as new."

Sitting at the wheel of Bromley's old machine, which—if you looked at it in the right way—was as able to make far journeys into beautiful and fabulous lands as any other magic chariot, Paul Dodd acted as chauffeur for a princess the whole afternoon. They found the precipice over which the Purple-Hooded Prince hurled the Naughty Dragon and the Peering Pool where the Princess Susanna first discovered her Beauty and the Shining Highway down which the Princess Susanna would one day pass into the Marvellous City of the Purple-Hooded Prince.

"Only you and the Prince could drive this great big car, couldn't they, Paul?" Susan looked up at him from under the brim of her little leghorn hat. "Maybe even the Prince couldn't. How do I know I will like the Prince as well as you, Paul? Does he go to Benny's school?"

In the end they found the Chocolate Tree and, strangely enough, it *was* sprouting caramels, although Paul Dodd had to climb up to the second big branch to get even as many as four of them. Susan said she doubted that even the Prince could have got up that tree without somebody to boost him—and she was probably right. So they started for home and would have arrived there soon enough but for a delay caused by Twinkle, who from his special seat in the rear spied a gray rabbit crossing the road. Susan, moved by her Twinkle's obvious frenzy and after exacting his absolute promise that he would not bite the rabbit, let him out for a chase. Even so, she felt some uneasiness. "Because it looked to me, Paul, very much like a rabbit whose dad had told her that she must not race."

Susan was very tired that night, so weary as she sat humming to herself in her blue downstairs playroom that it seemed too much trouble to turn the thick pages of her littlest picture book or to shake her bubble pipe hard enough to make the bubbles come off. Finally she went to a bottom drawer and began searching among the small white garments.

Paul Dodd was in his study working upon another manu-

script, of which, as usual, he had great hopes, when Susan brought her nightgown in. "Put it on me, Paul," she said. "Because my eyes are getting sticky. I most probably can't even wait for my story."

He glanced at her quickly and carried her upstairs to her white bed. The moonlight poured down over the windowsill. Susan revived a bit when she was tucked in. "I might as well go to sleep listening to a story as listening to nothing, though," she said. "Tell me about Princess Susanna. Benny said I wasn't her. He doesn't know so very much, does he, Paul? Tell me about when I shall go to the City of the Prince and be chosen for the Queen of Beauty. When shall I go, Paul? Will you and Twinkle go too?"

He drew again for her the glamorous picture of gilded towers and bright parades. "And when the Princess appears in the front seat of her chariot, which is every bit as big as our car, all the people will stand back in amazement because she is so lovely. They will say: 'Oh, the lucky Purple-Hooded Prince to find such a darling beauty! Who is she? Who is she?' And soon the news will fly like wildfire through the whole throng that it's the beautiful little Princess Susanna herself. But the Princess Susanna will not hear that because the great roar of the Marvellous City fills the deep streets. She will simply sit there smiling and waving to all the people while she proceeds slowly onward. And soon the tallest tower of all looms up ahead and she knows that the Prince must be waiting for her there——"

Susan was asleep. A faint smile still pulled lightly at the corners of her mouth, and shadows seemed to flit across the transparent smoothness of her tiny face. Several times during the night he went to look at her, but she had only sunk into a deeper sleep.

The following afternoon Paul Dodd paced his study. He sat down and tried to write a few lines, but he could not. He went out into the hall where Dr. Towson's hat and bag rested on the table and beside them another hat and a stick. He went out upon the porch and walked up and down rapidly, mumbling and debating something with himself. Towson's run-about stood parked at the gate, and in the end he walked out and sat in the driver's seat, waiting.

Soon, although it seemed hours, Dr. Towson and the other

appeared in the doorway and came slowly toward him out on the flagged walk, talking rapidly in low voices. The man from the city tapped the walk with his stick. The ear phones of his stethoscope stuck out of his handkerchief pocket. Towson cleared his throat, "Dr. Preston can give us no hope, Dodd," he said. "In fact, quite the reverse. He thinks it is astonishing that she has lasted through the past six months with her heart in that shape."

Dr. Preston murmured something about "These scarlet-fever hearts. I'm afraid she has not many days, Mr. Dodd. A fainting spell or two first perhaps. There is really nothing you can do."

"Oh, yes," said Paul Dodd, "there is very much that I can do, although I have no doubt about Susan's condition. We just had to be sure, didn't we, Towson?" He began an awkward thanks for Dr. Preston's coming out for so little, but Towson interrupted, and then the two of them drove off and left him.

Paulson's Park consisted of a few long board tables set in the edge of a small pine grove, a paint-scarred, tent-covered merry-go-round, a stretch of meadow, and a pathway leading sharply down to the strip of beach on the Sound. The Sunday-school picnic would not have been considered bona fide held elsewhere than in Paulson's Park, and the bright and blue day at the first warm edge of September which had fallen to their lot found the usual groups of summer-clad ladies hovering over the luncheon baskets, setting places with paper napkins and cardboard spoons. Most of the children, as an unnecessary stimulus to their appetites, were in for a swim. Afterward would come the picnic feast.

Paul Dodd and Susan and, of course, Twinkle were down on the beach with the others. He had put her into a tiny slip of a blue bathing suit with a white fish embroidered on it and, although she could not really go into the water, she had quite a time, as she said, wetting her toes. That meant letting the fanlike spread of the gentle waves come in over her scampering feet. In the end, however, she came running back to him breathless and frightened because a whole wave had gone over Benny Trout's head. Benny himself, spitting salt water and entirely undismayed, regarded her terror with stolid masculine disdain, while Twinkle, with a rime of sea foam on his

nose, cocked his querulous little head and emitted a ludicrous growl.

Mrs. Wilcox, dark-eyed and yearning, apparently getting some relief from the activity of her hands, presided over the Dodds' table. She had prepared the basket and, as Susan put it, they really did have ginger-cake men with white sugar eyes and lemonade which was as pink as you please, and would Paul kindly not watch to see how many cups of it she drank? Although their small group was the object of many curious glances, the visiting from table to table going on generally among the others seemed to pass them by.

The picnic luncheon was nearly over. Mrs. Wilcox had produced as a climax another orange cake with "Susan" written on it in blue icing, and Susan herself and Paul Dodd and even Mrs. Wilcox clapped their hands, while Twinkle barked uncertainly.

Then Twinkle disappeared. The flapping edge of Mrs. Trout's tablecloth caught his momentary fancy, and he watched its dangling, tantalizing movement above his head for some time. Then he made a jump.

The crash, the screaming, the excited voices, and Twinkle's astonished yelping as Mrs. Trout belaboured him with a long heavy kitchen spoon all happened so quickly. The whole picnic rushed to the scene of excitement, and in its van was a tiny, golden-headed fury in a white-and-blue dress who dived under the wreckage of the table to gather her darling up in her arms and rescue him from further punishment. "You stop!" she shouted at Mrs. Trout, her high treble sounding above the din. "You stop or my Paul will—will—— I'll call my bumble bees, and they'll sting you and sting you——"

Mrs. Trout was equally and less excusably beside herself. "Take your nasty little dog," she said. "Why doesn't your father keep the both of you at home where you belong—with your crazy talk—if he really is your father? God only knows who you Dodds are——"

Martha Towson, wiping strawberry ice cream from her skirt, joined in: "Yes, if she's too particular for the Sunday school she ought to be too particular for the Sunday-school picnic."

Silence smothered the clamour as quickly as it had arisen. There was a sudden retreat of the whole circle from its centre,

as if they had just remembered. Susan lay where she had fallen, a collapsed little bundle of white. And then Paul Dodd broke through and gathered her up in his arms. For a moment he stood there with her, trembling, but he did not seem such a little man. He seemed colossal, towering, while he trembled.

That was an instant of swift insight for Paul Dodd. He felt Susan's faint and fast breathing upon his cheek, and he knew that she had not gone. She had fainted, and he knew that if she had not fainted, her world—the gossamer world of delight which he and she had created for her few years—would have burst like one of her soap bubbles against the rough surface of a more real and rugged world. He knew that he would have failed again; that he had almost bungled as of old. But she had fainted before the bubble burst, and the Princess Susanna breathed softly in his arms. The tools of his infinite and delicate fabrication were still in his hands, which, although they trembled, had not yet struck amiss.

He was sitting beside Susan's white bed when she opened her wide little eyes and smiled as though everything were gay—if one but knew. She and Paul knew what a delightful business everything was. "Do you know what a dream I had, Paul? Well, I dreamed that we had started out for the Marvellous City. Don't you think it's about time we did start, Paul? The Purple Prince may get tired of waiting. He might just take any old little princess. I think it's time we started. I mean really, Paul."

Mrs. Wilcox and Dr. Towson waited downstairs. The doctor had told Paul Dodd that he must be ready, for she would not last until morning. But Dodd knew better. He and Susan had a rendezvous to keep before she could go. So he remained there only until the white, blinking lids came down over her eyes again. Then he went downstairs, stopped in his study for a small roll of ten-dollar bills which he had left in his desk drawer, and, mumbling something to the doctor about going to the village, left the house. Dr. Towson put his hand on Mrs. Wilcox's arm. "No," he said, "let him alone. Dodd knows what he's doing."

Susan lasted until morning, the bluest and earliest and gayest morning she had ever seen. Paul was driving, and she, in her very best white dress, her white socks, her patent-leather

slippers and everything, rested comfortably against a pillow in the seat beside him; for naturally she would not look her best when they arrived if she were tired. In the tonneau was a big brown paper bundle which Paul had picked up in the village, and on the back seat, with his paw carefully bound and a savoir faire equal to the occasion, sat the apparently unrepentant culprit of yesterday. So Bromley's old car struck the Boston Post Road, to give it an unsuitable name, and headed southwestward for the Marvellous City of the Purple-Hooded Prince.

"I suppose it's far away over hill and down dale, isn't it, Paul?" asked Susan. "Could anybody but you find it?" She was like some beautifully fragile figurette in ivory with two intensely blue little dots painted in for eyes. It was an effort for her to talk, but no one told her not to. She just talked whenever she wanted, although as a mark of deference to the dignity of the day she had expressly forbidden her Twinkle to do any of his barking.

New Haven did not notice, and neither did Bridgeport. It was none of Stamford's business, and Larchmont and Greenwich could think what they pleased. Susan was asleep most of the way, waking for brief moments to ask if they were almost there. Once she seemed to have fainted, but that lasted only a few minutes, and soon Susan roused herself, laughing with her usual glee. "What will Benny Trout say when he sees me wearing my crown, Paul? Well, he can have my bubble pipe."

Farther down, for purposes of his own, Paul Dodd turned aside from the main route upon a road which led diagonally into high ground south of White Plains. They climbed a long hill, and then he brought the car to a halt, waiting for Susan to discover for herself. Presently she leaned forward, excited, pointing with three fingers at once. "Look, Paul! See? 'Way over there. It's it!"

A hazy distance stretched away below them, and at its farthest, seeming to appear above a faintly purple border of horizon cloud, rose a stalactite profusion of towers, visible intermittently and then only at their sun-gilded peaks.

"It's just as you said, Paul," said Susan. But presently, smiling and sighing in her content, she was asleep again.

She must have been asleep for a long time. When she opened her eyes and sat up again, she could hardly believe it. She was

in the very heart of the Marvellous City, with all the great houses made of big stones and all the shining windows and all the twenty hundred motors in two great parades, one going each way, and all the thirty million hundred people lining the wide street and, but for the great roar of the Marvellous City, she knew she would hear them say: "Oh, it's the beautiful little Princess Susanna herself."

Susan could see very plainly that all eyes were bent upon her triumphal chariot—as, indeed, many of them were—and her sense of obligation rose to the moment. She stood up in the seat and waved and smiled, especially when anybody waved to her. Occasionally she gave a sly glance at her Paul, as if to say: "We knew it would be like this, didn't we?"

Up ahead a whistle blew to herald her approach, and a great light blinked red. Their car stopped when a huge man in blue and buttons held up his hand and saluted them, and then still another parade passed in review right before their eyes. Susan was so thrilled. She stood up again and waved to everybody who waved to her.

Subsiding when they moved on again, she watched Paul to see how he was taking all this. "Don't you think we ought to be hurrying on to the Prince?" she asked. "Maybe he won't like everybody seeing me first. Oh!—is that his palace?" She pointed down the avenue at a massive structure of steel and stone rearing in terraced sections until its bright dome seemed drawn against the sky.

"His palace is taller even than that," said Paul Dodd.

"Oh!" said Susan again. "And will he be waiting in his purple robe?"

"He will probably come out on the balcony and throw down flowers when you come," said Paul.

Susan's impressions were blurred. Twice more she sat up and pointed out sky-reaching towers which surely must be "it." But each time Paul said, "Taller than that, Susan." Magic names were also on Paul Dodd's lips. They had come down Fifth Avenue and crossed to Park and now moved slowly northward between its square bulks of stone toward a stupendous white column, conceived in the mighty poetry of the genius of New York and mounting infinitely to some pin-point zenith of the imagination against the blue. Some called it the Ritz Towers and people lived there and paid rent, but Paul

Dodd called it the Palace of the Purple-Hooded Prince. "There, Susan," he said. "There!"

While they rolled onward Susan lay back against her pillow, reaching out her hand toward the great white tower as if she wanted to pull it to her. Then it loomed suddenly over them, and the car stopped still at the very gate. "Where is he, Paul?" she whispered. "Is he putting on his purple hood?"

"I think he is," said Paul Dodd. "I think he will soon appear on that balcony. Do you see the balcony, Susan? Now I will go inside and announce that the beautiful little Princess Susanna is here at last."

He took the brown paper bundle from the tonneau and strode past an astonished doorman into the dim interior. He was gone only a minute, a portentous minute for Paul Dodd. But two of his ten-dollar bills and the luck of finding an Irish bell boy was all that he needed.

Susan did not even look at him when he took his seat at the wheel again, although her hand reached out and closed upon his fingers. Her rapt gaze was upon the lowest balcony, not very far above their heads. Paul Dodd's eyes were upon the balcony too, although he could not see. He could only wait for Susan's exclamation of delight, her quick, tight grip upon his fingers while his arm supported her. "Oh!" she said. "See him, Paul! He has on his purple robe, and his crown has golden points. Catch the flowers, Paul. He is throwing me his blossoms." Then he felt her little form relax and he knew that the Princess Susanna had been crowned forevermore in a kingdom which was never in this world.

Bromley's old machine moved slowly forward to the next traffic stop with Paul Vane Dodd at the wheel. Once more his stature seemed to have increased until he was not a little man at all. He was a man whose soul was full of iron, and cased in the iron was a rare and precious treasure which could never be taken from him and the possession of which made him mighty and unconquerable. It was a treasure he had made himself, without bungling and with fine craftsmanship to the very end. He smiled at the stone of New York, which was only putty to be moulded, after all. He spoke the name of Susan, and his voice drowned out the roar of a metropolis.

North Mercer saw no more of the Dodds, and, although

the name of Paul Vane Dodd became known to most people, the people of North Mercer never even wondered if that could be the one they had known as "little Dodd."

But once they might have seen him, because he stopped at Bromley's garage to have some air put in the tires of his huge, shining new car, and if they might have been excused for not recognizing him, they should at least have known the lively but dignified interest which his four-footed companion was expending upon the garage cat. When his car was ready Paul Vane Dodd drove on to a grove of trees, one of which was said to be a chocolate tree that sprouted caramels, although he saw no indication of any such phenomenon now. So he went on looking for other things, a tiny brook-made pond which had once appeared to be an ideal Peering Pool should any princesses happen to be passing by that way.

Afterward he turned back across the winding meadow road and stopped his car on the hilltop. He climbed out and sat down on the gray stone wall. A blue jay joined him, not ten yards away, and a big yellow butterfly flopped by overhead. Climbing across the meadow from the direction of the mud puddle which used to be down in the hollow, a black spot was becoming distinguishable as the figure of a small, though not so very small, venturing boy.

THE MAN WHO CAUGHT THE WEATHER

By BESS STREETER ALDRICH

From *Century*

HE LIVED next door to us when I was a girl—old Mr. Parline. To be sure, his wife lived there, too, but we never saw very much of her. She was one of the immaculate housewives of that day, whose life was bounded by the hundred small tasks of a home into which the modern button-pushing conveniences had not come. A shy, effacing woman she was—"mousy" describes her too well to abandon the term for its mere triteness. Mr. Parline was the one who did the talking, who neighbored with the rest of us, who came to the back door bringing us gifts from his garden.

The Parline house sat in the midst of trees and flowers like Ceres among her fruits. We were just then emerging from the dark age of fences into the enlightened era of open lawns. By your fenced or fenceless condition you were known as old-fashioned or up-to-date. One by one the picket and the fancy iron and the rough board fences on our street had gone down before the god of Fashion. Mr. Parline, alone, retained his—a neat picket, painted as white as the snowballs that hung over it, Juliet-like, from their green foliage balconies.

The shrubbery was not so artistically placed as that of to-day. We had not learned to group it against houses and walls, leaving wide stretches of lawn. Single bushes dotted Mr. Parline's lawn, a hydrangea here, a peony there, a tiger lily beyond, in spaded spots of brown, mulch-filled earth, like so many chickens squatting in their round nests.

The Parlines were of English extraction although both had been born in Vermont. There was a faintly whispered tale

that they were cousins, but there was no one so intimate as to verify the gossip and no one so prying as to ask.

Mr. Parline was a half head shorter than his tall, slender wife. He was stocky of body, a little ruddy as to complexion, like the colour of his apples, a little fuzzy as to face, like the down on his peaches. There was a quiet dignity about him that fell just short of pompousness. "Mr. Parline" his wife called him, in contrast to the "John" and "Silas" and "Fred" with which the other women spoke of their liege lords. Where other women in the block ran in to our home with the freedom of close acquaintances, Mrs. Parline alone occasionally came sedately in at the front gate in a neat brown dress covered with a large snowy apron starched to cardboard stiffness.

It was Mr. Parline who came often. With that manner which was paradoxically gentle and pompous, he would bring us edibles from his garden all summer long on a home-made flat wooden tray. That garden, as neat as constant care could make it, was the delight and despair of everyone who attempted to emulate it. Not a pigweed showed its stubborn head. Not a mullen-stock lifted its thick velvety self. The bricklaid paths, without sign of leaf, might have been swept, even scrubbed. As for the growing contents of the garden, they made a varicoloured and delightful picture. In its perfection every cabbage might have been a rose, every beet an exotic tropical plant, the parsley dainty window-box ferns. To Mr. Parline there was no dividing line between the beauty of flowers and the beauty of vegetables. With impartiality he planted marigolds near the carrots and zinnias next to the beans.

"Just a little of the fruits of my labour," was his dignified greeting on those occasions when he tapped at the back door. In the centre of the wooden tray might repose a cabbage, the dew still trembling upon the silver sheen of its leaves, around it a lovely mass of the delicate shell-pink of sweet peas. One felt it as much of a sacrilege to plunge the cabbage into hot water as it would have been to cook the sweet peas. Or he might have several bunches of grapes in merging shades of wine red and purple, their colours melting into the wine red and purple colours of shaggy asters. Old Mr. Parline had the heart of a poet and the eye of an interior decorator.

We never saw Mrs. Parline pulling a vegetable or cutting a

flower. Occasionally, at evening, she walked in the paths with all the interest and curiosity of a stranger, evidently considering the garden as sacred ground as did the rest of us. Indeed, Mother was at their back door one day when Mr. Parline came up the path with the inevitable wooden tray. There were beets on the tray, their tops cut, their bodies like blood-red hearts, around them white sweet Williams and crimson phlox. "I was just bringing my wife some of the fruits of my labour," he said in his courteous, half-pompous way.

We laughed about the phrase at home. Ours was a noisy, hilarious, fun-loving family. One member might bring in a mess of dirty potatoes in a battered old pail. "A little of the fruits of my labour," he would imitate Mr. Parline's pompous dignity. Or another, coming in with the first scrawny radishes, might have placed a few limpsy dandelions around them as a floral satire on the contents of Mr. Parline's wooden tray.

If the garden was the old man's hobby, the weather was his very life. It was inconceivable that anyone should be so wrapped up in the constant change of the elements. To other busy people the weather was incidental to their labours, the setting in which they performed their tasks. It might be pleasant or inconvenient, but it remained a side issue. To old Mr. Parline it was the important event of the day. He scanned the heavens, read the almanac, watched for signs of changes. Of the last he had a thousand at his command. If the sun went down in clouds on Friday night, if it rained the first Sunday in the month, if a dog ate grass, if the snow stuck to the north sides of the trees—he knew to a nicety what the results would be. To old Mr. Parline the weather was not the background. It was the picture itself. It was not the mere setting for daily living. It was life itself. No government official connected with the Weather Bureau made it more his life's thought. In the kitchen he kept a large calendar upon which he made notations for the day. Every vagrant shifting of the wind, every cloud that raced across the blue was recorded. For what purpose no one knew. *Another slight dash of snow at noon. Temperature 34. Sun came out at 3 p. m.* It seemed so small, so trivial, that a man should give so much time and thought to that which he could not change. He had thermometers by the house, on the north side to show the coldest registration, on the south to get the hottest, in the garden, by the barn. They were like

traps everywhere—baited with mercury—little traps to catch the weather.

From Mr. Parline's conversation one gathered that an overseeing Providence had given him exclusive charge of the elements. If his words did not utter it, his manner implied it. "Well, how do you like my June day?" his attitude seemed to be. If the day was bad, he was half apologetic. If it was pleasant, he glowed with satisfaction. The summer afternoon on which we were to have a little social gathering, he came to the back door and, with genuine feeling, told us how sorry he was that the day was dull and rainy. His manner showed humiliation, as though from the standpoint of neighbourliness he had failed us in a crisis. "I am very sorry," he said in his gentle, half-pompous way. "I had thought—had every reason to believe—that it would be sunshiny." We assured him that we bore him no grudge, and he went home relieved, returning with the wooden tray on which lay a heap of ruby cherries, a delicate mass of baby's-breath around them.

Was there a great national event, his talk turned immediately to the weather in which it was consummated. When he read the newspapers he seemed to ignore the main issue of the news. The weather, lurking in the background, was apparently of greater importance to him than the magnitude of the event. On the day of Dewey's triumph, he spoke immediately of the weather, wondering whether it had been dull or sunny in the harbour. At an inauguration there was no comment from him concerning the great issue of the day, the change in the policy of the administration. He gave forth no acclaim or condemnation of the new head of the government. His mind dwelt only on the fact that the new President was having to ride up Pennsylvania Avenue in a mist.

Vegetables, flowers, and the weather—they were Mr. Parline's whole existence. Such little things they were, we said. Whether his wife was bored by the triviality of his life, we could not know. She was too reserved for anyone to sense her reactions to her husband's small interests. We could see her working about the house all day. Sometimes she brought out quilts and hung them on the line for cleaning. They were of intricate patterns, beautifully pieced and quilted—the Rose of Sharon, the Log Cabin, the Flower Basket, and the Rising

Sun. "I'll bet the old man sleeps under the Rising Sun," one of the family remarked and we laughed uproariously at the joke. In the evening Mrs. Parline often came out and strolled through the paths, stepping gingerly about like a stranger, listening to the old man's courteous, half-pompous talk. She was deeply afraid of storms, he had told us years before. And when one saw the first dark clouds looming up from the southwest in summer, or the first gray ones rolling in from the north in winter, one also saw old Mr. Parline hurrying home, his square, heavy body swinging along out of its accustomed slower movements. To get home to Mrs. Parline when there was rain or hail or snow was his first duty. It was the only time when he ever seemed thrown out of his pompous calm. You saw them later through the windows looking out at the storm together.

The Parlines attended a little ivy-grown church where the old gentleman passed the collection box. When his own part of the service was over he would take a seat near the door, one eye on the sky. It was as though he must have everything as auspicious as possible when the congregation should return home. One wondered if he heard the sermon at all. A queer old man.

But the queerest thing of all was his strange prophecy that the day would come when the weather could be regulated. We young folks guffawed at that. "He was eccentric before he sprung that one," we said, "but now he's a nut."

In his half-pompous, half-gentle way, he argued it. "In the centuries to come, who knows but that humanity will have progressed to such an extent that men can catch the weather and retain it—hold it for a time to their own choice? You smile at that." He was sensitive to our thoughts. "But strange things have happened. Who would have thought you could catch the human voice in a little box and listen to it through a tube to the ear?" This was all some twenty years ago. "Who would have thought a machine would rise up in the air under its own power? Who would have thought carriages without horses would go about the streets?"

"The whole trouble would be," we joked with him, "you would want rain the day we wanted sunshine, and living next door to us, there would be complications."

"I don't pretend to know how it could be accomplished," he

said in his gentle, dignified way. "I merely suggest that in the years to come it may be so."

So the Parlines went on living their quiet lives. Refined, gentle folk, but different—and a little queer.

And then on a spring day, old Mrs. Parline died, as quietly and unostentatiously as she had lived. There was no fuss about it. A hard cold, the doctor coming and going, a neighbour slipping in and out of the back door, a cousin coming out from Chicago to care for her—death. The various members of our family went over to the house. Other neighbours came, as they do in small towns. A man's sorrow is the town's sorrow. In a neighbourly community, sympathy takes concrete form. It becomes buns and flowers and apple jelly and sitting up.

Old Mr. Parline greeted us kindly, courteously. Outwardly he showed no manifestations of his grief, except that his face was gray and drawn. He was solicitous of our comfort. He brought in fuel for the kitchen stove and oil for the lamps. He went to the cellar and came back with apples, polishing them scrupulously. He asked us if we were too cold or too hot. He went up and down his tulip beds pulling a few tiny weeds from the soil. Such little things in the face of death! He looked at the thermometer, at the almanac, at the sky, and predicted a pleasant sunshiny afternoon for the services. A queer old man, we all said. Not even death itself could take his mind away from the habits of a lifetime.

Mrs. Parline was buried in Riverside Cemetery. "It seemed very mild out there this afternoon," he said to us a day or two after the services. "There was a light breeze from the northeast." We knew where "out there" was.

By Memorial Day there was a stone at the grave and a mass of scarlet geraniums which he had transplanted, and some parsley. "How odd," we said, "parsley from the vegetable garden." But he was always odd. We walked around the stone to read the inscription. Propped up against it, in the lush grass, was a thermometer. We laughed a little—but only a little. Some laughter is half tears.

During that summer he seemed lost, a boat without a rudder. It was pathetic the way he went about his housework. He hung the quilts out on the line to clean them—the Flower

Basket and the Log Cabin, the Rose of Sharon and the Rising Sun. We would see him, walking about the yard in the evening with a lantern, reading the thermometers.

"Look at that," we young folks said, "he's batty."

"Oh, no," Mother said, "he's lonely."

And then, quite suddenly, we realized that he was going out to the cemetery at the sign of every storm. At the first glimpse of a thunderhead looming up over the trees, we would see him slipping out of the white picket gate and hurrying down the street. In some indefinable way he must have felt that he wanted to carry out that old habit of protecting her.

"It's ridiculous," we said.

"It's beautiful," Mother said.

If we expected his garden to deteriorate, we were mistaken. He took more pains with it than ever. More often he came to the back door with its products for us. Once, someone spoke tactfully about paying him, that he ought to have some compensation for his work. He looked pained. "Oh, no," he said, with gentle dignity. "Please do not speak of it again."

He found out the neighbours' various likes and dislikes. "I put out some turnips for you," he said to Mother. "I do not care for them myself, but I want you to have some." Yes, a kind old man.

And he continued to manage the weather. "I do not want to intrude." He came to the back door. "But I see your family is making preparations to go to a picnic."

"Yes, Mr. Parline. Wouldn't you like to go with us?"

"Oh, no, thank you. You are very kind. But I have work in my garden. I went to a picnic once in my youth. It was a very enjoyable occasion. I wanted to tell you that I think it will rain before night. The wind has switched to the east and the temperature is five degrees higher." The queer old codger.

And then, as the years went by, he began to include others than the immediate neighbourhood in his gifts—people he had not known before and with whom he became acquainted in the cemetery.

A cemetery is a friendly place. You talk with people there whom you have not known in town. "The grass ought to be mowed," you may say to the wealthy widow by her husband's mausoleum, or "Do you think the peonies will be out by Memorial Day?" to the Italian fruit vender by his baby's

grave. So people who talked to the old man "out there," even though they lived across town, became the recipients of his garden products.

For three years he lived his queer, busy life there alone with his garden and his thermometers.

It was in December of the third winter after his wife's death that the gray clouds of the big snow began rolling up from the northwest. Someone saw him slip out of his gate, lantern in hand, and hurry down the street.

"You don't suppose that poor old man is going out there to the cemetery?" Mother was solicitous. She put a shawl over her head and hurried out a side door. We could hear her calling, "Oh, Mr. Parline!" When she came in she had deep sympathy in her eyes. "I told him I thought he ought not to go out when it looked so snowy. He said in his dignified old way, 'That's why I want to go. I must get out for a few minutes before the storm breaks.' I suppose he feels that he protects her just as he used to. Isn't it pathetic?"

We had supper. Company came. It began to snow—soft, damp, heavy flakes. It was late when it came to us that there was no light in the Parline cottage. Father went over. When he found no one, he went after two other neighbours and together they went "out there." I think from the first they expected to find—what they found. He was huddled up against the stone where he had crumpled while stooping down to look at the thermometer. The doctor said death had been instantaneous, that he had evidently taxed himself hurrying to make the trip before the storm broke.

They brought him home. Neighbours went into the little house, not so immaculate as in the old days, but in order. In the kitchen they talked in low tones about the old man, as though from the front room where he lay he might hear their comments.

A queer old man, they all agreed, but kind, unusually kind. Mother went into the cellar and brought up scarlet-cheeked apples and mellow pears. "He would have wanted to pass them around," she said, with that understanding of humanity which she always seemed to possess. Scrupulously she polished them before she served them.

The cousin and a young married daughter came. The cousin

cried a little, tears that were not especially sad. "I didn't feel that I knew him very well," she told us. "When I took care of Cousin Sarah he was always very kind to me. He brought me everything from the garden and kept me supplied with fuel. But I never really got acquainted with him. When we did talk it seemed to be only about the weather. But he was a good old man."

They took him "out there" where his wife was, and the dead geraniums under their thick covering of snow, and the parsley from the vegetable garden, and the thermometer.

In the evening Mother and I went over and sat a while with the cousin and her daughter. They replenished the fire in the kitchen stove with some of the wood Mr. Parline had brought in. They brought apples and elderberry wine from the cellar. The house had that lonely feeling which hangs over one from which a soul has just gone.

Drawn by thoughts of the old man's hobby, Mother walked over to the huge bank calendar hanging there on the kitchen wall. The last day of the year it was, and so the last of the calendar with its one vacant page. Mother thumbed over the closing pages, each one filled with the old man's wavering writing. *Indications of snow. Wind in the east. Temperature 20 at the north side of the house. 19 at the barn. 18 out there.* Underneath was a home-made set of shelves, all the old calendars of the bygone years in neat piles, the dates printed on the backs.

Through the clean, small-paned window, we could see low clouds breaking and slipping into the east. We were no doubt thinking the same thought—of the old man lying "out there" in the dignity of death, with the scudding clouds and the wind in the west, the old man who had lived close to the wind and the rain, the hail and the snow. Death would not seem so significant to him to-night as the importance of the setting—the rift in the clouds and the end of the storm.

There was the last vacant page on the calendar. He would have wanted it filled. Mother looked at it for a moment, then picked up the short, stubby pencil hanging limply on its long string, and wrote the weather for the day—the gentle old man's long Day: *Shadows gone from the valley—no night—and the need of no candle—sunshine—eternal sunshine—and the Seven Stars.*

HOT COPY

By M. C. BLACKMAN

From Harpers

THERE never was another person, I guess, who hated newspapers and reporters like this author chap, Arthur M. Dodd. I wish I could get that guy off my mind.

If he saw me again, he would not know me from Adam's off ox, but he has been quite an influence in my life, and I may turn out to be a famous writer on account of him. He was the cause, in a way, of me becoming a newspaper reporter, and now he has started me practising to be an author.

I'd just as soon he never got any closer acquainted with me, because if he knew all there is to know, he might get real nasty.

It was last week I met him in a speakeasy. Not that I am a boozier, but every man has to have a little drink now and then to steady him up. When I went in Dodd was sitting humped down in a chair and, in spite of the way he looked, I remembered him from that time up state when I got to be a reporter.

I cannot express it how that man looked. It gave me a feeling, and I am used to things. His face was as white as this piece of paper, except for a ragged set of whiskers; and his clothes looked like nothing to make a tailor proud. But it was his eyes that got me. Fishy, they were, but more like two agate marbles in a pile of sand. He did not look up, but just sat there like a lump.

Feeling kind of creepy, I ordered a shot of whisky straight when I had meant to have only a highball. After I gulped it down I stood there thinking about how this Dodd had changed. Three years ago he was as fine a looking chap as they grow in this neck of the woods. Everybody was predicting what a wonderful future he had before him. He worked his

way through college, with some help from a widowed mother, and had got quite a rep as a writer. I never could go his stuff, it was so queer; but the critics called him one of the Younger Philosophers, whatever that stands for.

But you could see he was a wreck now. Booze got him, and they say he is a dope, too. He hardly ever writes any more and spends what coin he has for liquor and dope. He spends a lot of his time in Chicago, hanging around taxi stands. I know why, and I might tell him a thing or two, but it is not any of my business.

Mike, the bartender, started kidding me about a story we had in the *Star* that day, and I was giving him the low down, when Dodd sat up in his chair and glared at us.

"Newspapers!" he said, almost choking. "Buzzards!"

That was a queer thing to say, but he did not say anything else. He sank back in his chair, and I noticed he looked at the liquor I had in my glass, with his mouth working. I figured he was short of coin and needing a drink. I saw he did not know me.

"Drink up, brother," I told him. "What will you have?"

"Thanks," he said, and shuffled up to the bar, ordering a shot. He could hardly wait for the bartender to set it on the counter, he was so eager. But he never drank that shot.

"What you said about newspapers," I began. "Now I am a newspaperman myself——"

Say, I have had people to look at me without any love in their eyes before. A fellow with my job has to get used to it. But this Dodd looked at me as though I had suddenly broke out with a filthy disease. I never saw anything so unfriendly in my life. I could guess why, but he ought to know that some things are like that.

"Scum!" he said, and what does the nut do next but pour that glass of good whisky in the cuspidor.

Well, I never argue with gin heads when they have been drinking, and it is no use getting insulted at things they say. They ain't right.

"Oh, if that is the way you feel about it, all right with me," I said. "It will probably do you more good in the cuspidor anyway."

But the poor prune could not stand it without a drink any longer. He came back to the bar and parked by me.

"I say, my friend," he remarked. "I am not quite myself to-day. If you will just forget what I said and renew your offer of a drink I will be obliged."

So I bought him another drink, and we got to talking. He was willing to talk as long as I bought the drinks, and I kept Mike pretty busy awhile. I saw he was sore on newspapers, so I dropped that and started talking about being an author.

I asked him if he thought I could learn to write short stories, and he said sure, it would be easy for a man with intelligence like me. Of course, I knew he was soaping me for the drinks, but still I am no nitwit.

I asked him how to go about it, and he said it would be best to get a good book on short-story writing and learn what he called the "mechanics" of writing, and then just write about everyday things that happened around me. That crack about "mechanics" gave me pause, as they say, because it sounded like work, and I always thought people who wanted to be authors just sat down and dashed off a couple of hot yarns and sent them off.

Anyway, I set up once more for Dodd and left him there looking more than ever like a last year's bird nest. I decided I would take his advice and try the thing out. While I have not got anything to say against newspaper work, because it is high class, still, I figure a man with brains ought to get into the magazine game where the big money is.

First, I have got to get used to writing. I am a street man and I 'phone in all my stuff to the fellows on the desk, and they set it down, put in the commas and all the "alleges" so it will read smooth and still be safe. It is my story, of course, but working that way I do not get much practice at writing. I expect my grammar is not as pure as the editors like, but I can learn that easy.

I am writing this for practice and another reason. I expect that as soon as a man becomes a famous author the editors and the public are going to want to know something about him. So while I am practising I am going to set down a few facts about my life, and when my history is needed it will be all ready. What I say will be the truth, and what I leave out will be nobody's business.

The less said about my early life the better, but there are a few things I want to mention before somebody else does.

It is a cinch that denials in print are about as useless as arguments with traffic cops. They do no good. When I am on a story I always say, "Now listen here, friend; say what you've got to say *first*. Deny charges before they are made, or in the same edition, anyway." And it usually works.

So nobody is going to put it over on Henry Jasper Brown—that's me—by digging up some past history of mine and giving *their* version of it. I got nothing to be ashamed of, but I know my newspapers.

I was born in Leavenworth, Kansas. Most people think that is only a prison, but it is a town also, and people live there. When I was born my old man was inside the walls. Maw was living outside, waiting for Dad to get out. He never did. He died in there when I was twelve years old, and he had three years to go. It was just as well he kicked off, because he died with Maw thinking he was a fine man and believing he got a dirty deal. I'm wise, and I know she would have learned different if he had got out. It seems he was doing right well selling gold bricks to farmers and then he switched over to peddling dope. The federals got him. But what is the use of going into details about that? It was just one of those things, as they say.

Maw laid the leather on me and made me go to school until I got too big to handle, and I skipped out. Don't think I threw her down, because I did not. I believe every man ought to keep at least one of the Ten Commandments, and I picked out the one about honouring thy father and mother. I could not do much by the old man, but I always honoured Maw. I sent her money when I had it and letters when I didn't. Now she has got a snug little cottage in Leavenworth and plenty of time to tinker with the radio, which she is bugs about. I go to see her every year or two.

Skipping over the next few years after I left home, in which nothing criminal or interesting happened to me, we come to this city, which is what I did.

I arrived here about the same time as a high-powered newspaper editor from New York, but I did not know then how important that was. My only interest in newspapers was in the "Male Help Wanted" columns. But even I noticed the change that came over the smallest of the two afternoon papers.

I mean it was very noticeable. It seems that the *Star* was bought by a company that owns a string of papers all over the country, all of them snappy, readable sheets. And how that little *Star* began to twinkle. It blossomed forth with three-inch streamers in red ink on pink paper, and more pictures than a family album. That New York editor, Mr. Morton, sure knew his headlines. A few weeks later I heard about his orders to the staff.

"Boil it down," he said, "and make it snappy. Then throw it away and fill the hole with pictures. Any fool can look at pictures, and our readers are fools."

Fools or not, they bought the *Star*. The circulation jumped from a few thousand to six figures, and believe me, the opposition was sick! It still is, but it tries to be scornful now. But it is hard to laugh off a rival circulation of two-three hundred thousand. The *Telegram* is so old it creaks, and as dignified as your maiden aunt. The editor still thinks a newspaper should be read and not seen!

Mr. Morton hired almost as many camera men as he had reporters, which was plenty. The snappers were all smart fellows, most of them from New York, and they knew their photos. Mr. Morton fitted out two trucks like regular studios, so the snappers could print their pictures on the way back to the office, and the speed they showed was a marvel. Editions every couple of hours and all of them hot.

I got a job driving one of the studio trucks. It was easy because I had been a taxi driver once.

It was like getting paid for having fun. That was three years ago when I thought eighteen dollars a week was good money. I got interested in the newspaper business the first week, and it did not take me long to get the hang of it, which is more than I can say for some of the old *Star* reporters, who pretty soon found themselves looking for jobs. But as I may have mentioned before, I am no dumb Isaac, and I could see that a picture of the pretty girl who saw the robbery was more important than a snap of the homely clerk who was robbed. That is first-reader stuff. I learned a lot from the snappers, too.

The third week I worked, there was a queer story broke in Wego, a small burg in an up-state county. The correspondent sent in a small item about plumbers finding the skeletons of two human bodies buried under the basement of the cottage

of Mrs. Emmaline Dodd. That was all, just three-four lines.

Most editors would have passed that by, but not Mr. Morton. He had not been here but a couple of months, but he clicked right away on that name Dodd. He knew that anything connected with the Dodd family was good copy, on account of the son of the family, the son being this same young writer chap, Arthur M. Dodd, which I met last week in the speakeasy. Mr. Morton hopped right on the story, figuring two skeletons in the basement was almost as good as one in the closet.

I saw that item in the paper and was interested because I had heard of the little burg Wego once before. Buck Hodges, a taxi driver I knew in Chicago, had a little skirt on his string, and she said she was from Wego.

Her name was Sylvia Laverne, and she wanted to be an actress until Buck came along. She was a cute little trick, with a funny little dimple in her left cheek, but she was too young. I told Buck he ought to pick them a little older, and he finally got wise and chucked her.

Mr. Morton sent a reporter, a snapper, and me up there to Wego. He picked me to drive the truck because the snapper told him I was always a lot of help, and I guess I was. It is a good thing he sent me, as things turned out. The reporter was named Anthony Watkins, and he was one of those kind I call lily-handed. He was always dreaming, and he did not seem to know what everything was all about. The only reason they kept him, I guess, was that he was really fluent on the typewriter, and they sent him up to Wego because they figured there probably would be a whole lot to write about nothing much. But I did not care for him.

Dick Burch was the photo expert and he was a good egg. He and I went up in the truck, which was only a two-hour drive, and Watkins followed on the train. We got there first and had time to look around a bit before the train got in.

We did not need much time to see all there was in Wego, which is like a million other towns that tourists try to dodge when they think of stopping for the night. One street (which was just a rough spot in the highway), a few stores, a few more houses, a big barn that passed as a hotel, the railroad station—and that is the picture of Wego. A half mile away was the lake, and by it the Dodd cottage. We drove by it for a once-

over, and it almost made me homesick. It looked a lot like Maw's place, with vines and flowers and a garden.

There was nobody at home. Arthur Dodd had been abroad nearly three years studying and writing, and he had made enough money to send his mother to California. His sister had gone there already to try to break into the movies and had drowned there, it seemed, just six months before all this happened. Her mother had been with her in Los Angeles several months before she got drowned. The old man had been dead for years, so there was only Arthur and his mother left. Arthur was having the cottage fixed up before Mrs. Dodd came back.

We got back to the station just as the train came in, causing great excitement among the natives as usual. Watkins got off and so did a man from the *Telegram*. One man, mind you. But there was a third passenger for Wego, which added to the excitement, because it was the first time in ten years three people had got off there at one time. At least, that is what I heard a guy say.

But my eyes popped when I saw that third man. He was Arthur M. Dodd himself. I knew him because it was only a week before that the *Star* carried a four-column picture of him, announcing his engagement to a swell New York society girl, who he fell in love with abroad.

And there was this dumb Watkins had been on the same train with him two hours and never got wise. You could not expect anything better of a *Telegram* man, but a *Star* man ought to be awake. I grabbed Watkins and whispered the tip. He looked kind of funny and excited.

"Are you sure?" he asked me.

"Hell's bells!" I said. "Ask him questions, not me."

From the way this Watkins looked at Dodd you would have thought he was looking at a god. I had heard him say he thought Dodd was a wonderful writer, but I did not think he actually worshipped the man, even if he did make lots of jack with his writing. They hardly mentioned the skeletons, and I was disgusted. Instead, Dodd talked about his mother and how wonderful she had been to him. He also told how much he loved his sister, Mary Lou, and how shocked he had been when his mother cabled him about her being drowned. Mrs. Dodd would not let him come home, he said, because the body

had never been found, and there was no use. Dodd seemed to take to Watkins, though I could not see why.

Well, Dick got busy, anyway, and while the *Telegram* man was still arguing with the half-dead hotel clerk, Dick and I were on our way back to the city with pictures of Dodd, the cottage with X marking the entrance to the basement, and a general view of Wego.

We had a layout in the final edition with a line:

YOUNG WRITER VIEWS GHASTLY FIND

There was some art work and a drawing of Dodd staring at two skeletons. The sketch of him looked more like a traveling salesman with the heebie jeebies than anything else, but the skeletons were plenty lifelike, if you get what I mean.

The pictures were fine, but there was not much to the story. It told about Dodd's return, and about finding the skeletons, one adult and one baby. Dodd was quoted as saying the cottage had not been occupied for nearly a year and that neither he nor his mother had any idea how the things got under the basement.

It wasn't much, but it stirred up interest in the case, and hot news was scarce. When Dick and I got back to Wego next day we found one of the Chicago papers had sent up a man and a photographer, and it began to look as if things might turn out interesting, after all.

The probe of the skeleton case, as we say in the headlines, was being carried on by the county coroner and the prosecutor. So far they had learned that two bodies, one adult and one baby, had been found under the basement of the Dodd cottage by plumbers. Which was pretty good for them.

But being prodded by the reporters the coroner crashed through with the statement that one of the skeletons was of a woman and the other of a very young infant. He also opined that they could not have been there more than two years, and gave a long explanation about the nature of the soil and something or other causing the flesh to decay quick. Not very sweet copy, but Watkins dressed it up pretty well, and we beat the *Telegram* on story and pictures. I decided Watkins might be half human, after all.

I was a little disappointed over what the coroner said about

the woman and the baby being dead at least two years, because I had been wondering if there could be any connection between the large skeleton and Mary Lou Dodd. It was just one of those wild hunches. But the Doc seemed to know his bones. It began to look as though a country dame and her baby had been bumped off and buried under the Dodd cottage while they were away, though why the murderer should pick that spot with the lake and miles of woods close at hand was more than I could figure out. And every female in Wego was well accounted for.

I did not see where a new lead for the story next day was coming from. Watkins did not seem to care, but settled down in the hotel lobby with a pencil and some paper. Probably he was writing poetry or figuring his expense account, or doing some other imaginative work. Some people are funny.

But I am a man of action, and I went out to stir around. I spent a pretty busy afternoon pottering around the Dodd place and talking to people, and then Dick and I went back to the city.

Next day I sort of casually suggested to the prosecutor when nobody else was around that it might be a good idea to look around the place for a weapon or something that might have caused death. He said he had not thought of that.

We could not shake off the other reporters, so the whole gang of us went down to the Dodd house and searched all over it, Arthur Dodd helping and chatting with Watkins. Then we went outside and looked around but did not find any blunt instruments or anything else that looked dangerous.

Before we left I sort of accidentally kicked at a flower pot near the outside basement entrance. It broke and when the dirt fell apart there was a small bottle in it. It was empty, but it had a poison label on it.

Everybody got excited except Watkins, and he looked at the bottle two or three times and then just looked bored. The prosecutor made an official statement about the find, the snappers took pictures, and the reporters sent in some more real news. All except Watkins. Honestly, that bozo got my goat.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked him. "Ain't you going to 'phone about this?"

"No," he said.

"Are you crazy?" I snapped. "Why in blazes are you passing up the only news you got to-day?"

"Because," he said, "I didn't like the looks of a brand-new poison label on a two-year-old bottle, if it was that old. That stuff was planted."

Well, he had me there. I clean overlooked the new label feature when I fixed it up. Yes, I might as well admit it was my job. Why not? It did no harm. Nobody else noticed my bust, but this Watkins is like that. But he thought it was the Chicago man did it.

However, I was determined the *Star* was not going to miss out on it after all my trouble, so I sneaked away and did some telephoning on my own. We had the story all right, but Watkins saw a late edition and he thought it had been rewritten from the other papers. He did not like it, but he liked even less what he got an hour or so later. Mr. Morton telephoned him. I figured it would be too good to miss, so I slipped over to the clerk's desk and picked up the receiver of an extension 'phone.

"Why didn't you send in something on that poison bottle?" the boss asked.

Watkins explained he was sure it had been planted and gave his reasons.

"Now, listen to me, young man," Mr. Morton said. "You were sent up there to find news, not to kill it. And when the prosecutor makes a statement, it is news. Understand?"

Watkins came away from the telephone looking like he had smelled a bad tomato. I had to laugh.

Dodd told the coroner and the prosecutor next day that his mother was coming home, and he asked them if they could not finish with the case before she got in, because he was afraid it might upset her worse than she was. But the poison bottle kept the thing alive, and they were still looking for "clues" when Mrs. Dodd arrived in Wego from California.

I clipped all the stories about that case, and I will copy the piece Watkins wrote about Mrs. Dodd, because it just goes to show how wrong some reporters can be. Also because that story got me started to doing some investigation of my own. He wrote:

It is almost impossible to think of horrible things in connection with Mrs. Emmaline Dodd, who arrived here to-day after a year in California, for a reunion with her son, Arthur M. Dodd, well-known young writer,

whom she had not seen since he went abroad nearly three years ago.

Two things marred their otherwise complete happiness in the meeting. One was the official investigation into the finding of two human skeletons beneath the tiny, vine-covered cottage where Mrs. Dodd lived happily for so many years and reared her two children to manhood and womanhood after a bitter struggle with poverty while they were mere babies.

The other shadow was their grief over the death of the daughter and sister, Mary Lou Dodd, who was drowned in California six months ago. Mrs. Dodd's sorrow has weighed heavily upon her, judging from her appearance to-day. She is a frail little woman, with dark, appealing eyes and the look of one who has suffered much and borne it well.

One marvels that she ever survived the struggles that must have been hers when she was left alone with two young children after the death of her husband eighteen years ago. With no resources other than the tiny home and her own capable fingers, she sewed for the villagers, tended a garden, and managed somehow to make ends meet. It is no wonder that Arthur Dodd is passionately devoted to her.

She has always been completely wrapped up in her two children, for whom she worked so many years. The sudden death of her daughter shattered half of her world. It was doubly hard, at a time when she was beginning to find real happiness in the success of her son.

Mrs. Dodd was so overcome with grief that she has never been able to furnish many details of the tragedy. For some reason, the California papers made no mention of the drowning, which occurred at a little-known beach resort, and the story did not reach this section of the country until the cablegram was received in Paris by Arthur.

There is a story that Mary Lou Dodd ran away from home a few years ago, fired with schoolgirl ambitions to go on the stage. Her mother, with understanding sympathy, persuaded her to return. Then, when she became convinced that the girl would never be content in Wego, she consented to her going to California to stay with a friend and seek a trial in motion pictures. She had little success in the already overcrowded field of filmdom, but it is understood that she was happily employed in a library at the time of her death.

Mrs. Dodd was too shocked by the gruesome discovery under her home to discuss it with reporters, and her son asked that she be excused from an interview.

Most of that is a lot of hokey, but it shows how Watkins was plumb sold on the Dodd family. Besides, there were two items that interested me a whole lot, and gave me a powerful hunch. One was that thing about Mary Lou Dodd running away from home, and the other was the reminder that Mrs. Dodd had been away from home only one year. And the coroner had said those bodies had been buried at least two years? I hadn't thought of it before, and neither had anybody else, but it looked as if Mrs. Dodd was living right there in the cottage when that woman and baby were buried.

Dick and I went back to Wego the day Mrs. Dodd arrived, instead of staying all night in the city like we had been doing. It was Saturday night, and I decided to talk to some of the natives. I went into the barber shop and risked my life getting a shave. Business was dull, so I sat around awhile talking to the barber, and to pep him up I gave him a few pulls at a bottle of bootleg I happened to have with me.

With a few slugs of liquor under his belt, how that barber did talk. He wasted enough language on me to last him six Saturdays in a city shop. Finally, I got him to talking about Mary Lou Dodd, and it was not long before he crashed through with a remark that nearly knocked my eye out.

"What was that?" I asked him, sitting up straight.

The barber grinned at me like something evil and then blinked like an owl.

"I say I got my own ideas about Mary Lou going away to California to join the movies," he said. "I think it was something different. After she came back from Chicago, where she run away, her maw kept her pretty close at home. But I was down by the lake one day and I saw her. She looked like if she wasn't married, she ought to of been. Only I never heard tell of a husband. Pretty soon after that she went to California."

"How do you know she went to California?" I shot at him. The barber looked puzzled.

"Why, everybody knew it," he said. "Ain't she been gone these two years? Didn't she drown down there?"

"I know, but did anybody see her leave town? I mean, on a train or in a car?"

"Why, no; I don't reckon as there was anybody as did see her leave. Mrs. Dodd just told the postmaster her daughter had gone to California, and he spread it around. Why, do you mean——?"

But I had left him quick. I beat it back to the hotel and found Watkins sitting there in the lobby, reading a book of short stories by this Arthur M. Dodd. I guess he never got such a surprise from a truck driver in his life before.

"Listen, Watkins, that woman's skeleton they found was Mary Lou Dodd," I said. "And the baby was hers," I added for good measure.

"Nonsense," he snapped, looking hard at me and sniffing. "Are you drunk?"

"Never was more sober or serious in my life," I came back at him. "And I'll bet a week's pay I got the right hunch."

"Why don't you read the papers?" he asked me. "Mary Lou Dodd was drowned in California."

"Who said so? The body was never found, and Mrs. Dodd put out the only dope the newspapers ever had."

"Besides, Mary Lou was never married, so the baby could not have been hers," was the next crack of this dumb reporter.

"Don't be silly. Pharaoh's daughter was never married, either, but she found little Moses in the bulrushes," I said. I used to go to Sunday school back in Leavenworth and got many a laugh out of it.

Then I told him the barber's story, and how nobody ever saw Mary Lou leave Wego, and when I got through pointing out this and that, Watkins was beginning to take notice. He also looked kind of sick, and I guess he was thinking about that plap he wrote about Mrs. Dodd.

"And it looks to me," I ended, "like Mary Lou and her baby were murdered, and I would not need two guesses to pick out the old lady as the guilty party. She probably thought she was doing it for her daughter's own good. Let's go get the prosecutor and the coroner and get busy while the opposition sleeps upstairs."

Watkins was still not as anxious as he might have been, but he came along. We dragged the officials out of bed, and they did not growl much. It took a lot of talking, with me doing the most of it, to convince them; but finally they saw the light. They were all for action.

"Now, lemme see," said the prosecutor, "they may be awake yet at the cottage. Let's go there and talk to Mrs. Dodd some."

"Come along, young man," the coroner said to me. "I don't remember seeing you around here before, but you seem to know a lot about this thing."

Arthur Dodd, still dressed, came to the door and asked us to come in. I noticed he looked worried. The prosecutor asked to see his mother.

"My mother is confined to her bed," said Dodd. "She has had a nervous breakdown. Can I be of service to you?"

"Well, I dunno," said the prosecutor, who was a soft-hearted gink for a man of his calling. "This is important,

mighty important. Could you come down to my office with me a little while?"

Dodd looked puzzled, but he came along. I thought they ought to have left somebody to guard the house, but I did not like to say so in front of Dodd. So we all went back to the prosecutor's temporary office over the drug store.

"Arthur," said the prosecutor in a kind voice, "we have got reason to believe that one of those skeletons found under your house was your sister, Mary Lou, and it looks pretty bad."

Dodd jumped out of his chair and turned pale as a ghost.

"That is absurd!" he shouted. "My sister was drowned only six months ago in California."

Well, the prosecutor talked on for about an hour and asked questions. And say, he was not so dumb as he looked, either. Dodd kept getting more and more nervous and worried, pacing back and forth and messing up his hair. Finally, the prosecutor said gentlelike that he guessed he would have to arrest Mrs. Dodd for murder.

"No! No!" Dodd begged. "Wait! I will tell you the whole story, just as my mother told it to me to-day. It would kill her if she were arrested and the story got out. But I will tell you, and I am sure you will do what is right."

Then he told his story, and oh, what a story! The part about Mary Lou was just about as I had figured it out. He told how his sister was high strung and impulsive and crazy to be an actress or a movie star.

"She ran away from home soon after I went abroad," Dodd said, still pacing. "She was little more than a kid and had never been away from home much, so she hadn't the least idea what to do when she got to Chicago. She assumed a fanciful name, but that was as near as she ever got to the stage.

"After a week she fell into the clutches of a man—a taxicab driver—who took advantage of her youth and innocence. He got her into trouble and then left her. She, poor kid, was terrified, so she came home to Mother and confessed everything. She never told all the details, but it was easy to piece together her story.

"My mother was nearly crazy with grief and shame," Dodd continued, looking kind of crazy himself. "She feared publicity and scandal, because she was afraid it would ruin

my career as well as Mary Lou's life. She made Mary Lou stay in the house, while she worried and prayed. There was no one to whom she could go for advice."

Dodd stopped a minute and looked in a queer way at the book Watkins had in his hand. It was the same book Watkins had been reading at the hotel, and Dodd looked as though he halfway expected it to say something. I do not think he ever actually saw any of us there except the prosecutor and maybe Watkins. I remember every word he said and how he said it, because I was more than interested. I got to thinking about Buck Hodges back in Chicago. I guess it is a good thing for him he turned bootlegger and went East.

"My mother kept putting off calling the doctor from day to day," Dodd went on. "Finally it was too late. Then she closed up the house and did what she could, herself, for Mary Lou. She knew nothing about such things, and Mary Lou and the baby both died. After that, my mother had only one thought, and that was to keep the thing a secret. All alone in that house with the bodies she dug a place in the basement and buried them. How she did it alone I do not know. She must have been a little demented."

Dodd shook like a leaf and covered his face with his hands. That last was the part I could not figure out by myself, but I saw he was telling the truth. There was nobody in the room doubted him. He went on with the story, but the rest was simple. Mrs. Dodd had lived alone in the cottage a year, after letting it out that Mary Lou had gone to California, not even writing her son what had happened. Then she went to join her daughter, so everybody thought, and six months later she sent word back that Mary Lou had drowned, which nobody doubted. Not even Arthur.

I began thinking what a whale of a story that was going to be, and I could picture already the eight-column strip of art across the front page, with a story that would be as long as the columns lasted. Mr. Morton believes in boiling stuff down, but he would throw out everything but the ads for a really good story. And this was one of the best.

It was not as sensational, maybe, as a good murder would have made it, but it was chock full of what the boss calls human interest.

I suddenly noticed that Watkins was talking.

"I am the only newspaper man present," he was saying, "and I promise I will forget what you have said. And of course I will not say anything about it to my rivals."

He shook hands with Dodd and looked like he was about to cry. But that crack of his floored me, and I could not make head or tails of it. I did not pay much attention to what followed, only I did hear the prosecutor say that of course he would drop the matter and just make a formal report about finding the bodies of two persons who came to their deaths from unknown causes. I had a sneaking suspicion that Watkins had meant what he said, if you can imagine it. I soon learned.

"I certainly do not intend to write anything about it," he replied to my question. "That family has suffered enough, and there are some things even a newspaper reporter will not do. If you have a shred of decency about you, you will never mention what you have heard from Dodd."

"Decency, my aunt," I retorted. "Who are you to be speaking such fine words? Ain't you about to throw down your paper on the biggest story it ever had? A fine newspaper man you turned out to be."

"Brown," he said, looking at me in that nasty way of his, "I am convinced you have no finer sensibilities whatever."

"Maybe I got no sensibilities," I said, "but I got sense, and that will buy more groceries."

"All right," he said, turning away. "Tell Morton I have resigned."

And a good thing, too, I thought. A guy like that has got no business in the newspaper game. He ought to join a sewing circle. I learned later he joined the *Telegram*, which is just as bad.

It was almost daylight by then, and I waited around the hotel, going over the story in my mind and eating breakfast. Then I put in a call for the *Star* about the time for Mr. Morton to come down.

"Mr. Morton," I said, "this is Brown. Driving your studio truck up here at Wego. I got a good story, which your reporter fell down on."

Then I told him all about it, brief, but not forgetting to mention that I had had a good deal to do with it. I could hear him sputtering at the other end of the line.

"Listen, Brown," he barked at me. "Tell just enough of that to a rewrite man for the first edition—— No! Wait! Do any of the other reporters up there even suspect any of this?"

"Not a suspicion," I told him.

"Come into the office as fast as that truck will bring you," he ordered. "Tell Watkins he is fired." So they were even.

Well, it was a fine story. We beat the whole world, and the front page was all art and my story. A rewrite man wrote it, but it was my yarn. It was hot copy, believe me, and darn good for a beginner like me. But the best was yet to come.

"Brown, do you know anything about writing?" Mr. Morton asked me.

"No, sir," I said, "but——"

"Brown," he said, "don't learn. I can see right now you are going to be my star reporter."

And Mr. Morton mostly knows what he is talking about.

Well, Mrs. Dodd died a few weeks later. She did not look very healthy when I saw her that time in Wego. Arthur Dodd had some kind of trouble with his girl and they called the match off. I guess he started hitting the booze, and drinking is bad for you if you do it regular. I never saw him again until last week in that speakeasy, and I don't care if I never see him again.

RIVER WITCH

By ROARK BRADFORD

From *Forum*

RUBY was happy in the levee camp with Yaller Jack and away from old Granny Lou's everlasting talk about witches and devils and bad luck spirits. Yaller Jack wasn't studying witches and things. That big, stout scoundrel made a dollar four bits every day out on the levee. And when he came in from work at night he wasn't always saying, "Don't spit in de fire, gal, hit'll dry up yo' lungs," or "Don't pour dish water on de ground after sundown onless you wants to git a buck aguer." When Yaller Jack came in from work he was ready to eat.

Ruby knew it would dry up her lungs to spit in the fire and that pouring dish water on the ground would give her a "buck aguer." She knew that almost everything anyone naturally wanted to do brought some kind of bad luck. And Yaller Jack knew it, too. But he wasn't always devilling her about it. Not Yaller Jack.

That Yaller Jack!—Came up to Whitehall Plantation and saw Ruby just once and started courting her! And before she hardly knew it, he went all the way to Baton Rouge to buy a pair of courthouse licenses so he could marry her! With a preacher! Ruby knew lots of women who married their men without any courthouse licenses or preacher or anything. But Granny Lou liked the idea of preacher marrying for her.

"De preacher utters de words over hit," Granny Lou explained. "When de preacher say, 'Ashes to ashes, Lawd, and dust to dust, Lawd,' well, dat de sign for ev'y yuther man to keep away f'm you. Cause ef'n a man come monkeyin' around after dem words is said on a gal"—Granny Lou rolled her eyes ominously—"well, he better jest watch out."

Ruby did not remember hearing the preacher say those

words. All she remembered was that she stood up in a new calico dress by the side of that big, handsome man and dug her bare toes in the ground while the preacher prayed and preached and everybody sang. Then Yaller Jack took her to the levee camp seven miles down the river, toting her bundle of clothes for her and talking big talk about how he was saving his money to buy a farm and have a house with chickens and children running about so thick until you couldn't hardly walk!

"Hit won't be long, Baby," Yaller Jack said. "Another year, maybe, and I and you settles down in a house by ourse'fs—ceptin' for de chickens and chilluns and things."

Ruby rolled her big white eyeballs shyly and said, "Humph! Ain't you de beatin'est man!" And she giggled.

The Walking Boss had everything ready for them when they got to camp. The tent was up, the stove in place, and the mattress of hay-filled sacks upon the rustic bunk of pine saplings. The Walking Boss had sent a present, too—a piece of side meat, potatoes, cabbage, and beans from the camp commissary. He wanted women in camp. The more women there were, the less inclined were the men to run off.

There were several other women in camp. Big Bess boasted a "regular" preacher wedding just like Ruby's, and she "looked after" the young bride, telling her how to get supplies at the commissary and have them charged against her husband's wages, and when to start supper, so it would be ready when her man got in from work. Urline offered some advice, but Big Bess shut her up.

"A preacher might er married you to Yancey," Big Bess snorted, "but ain't nobody never seed no papers to prove hit."

The other women made no claims to preacher weddings. They had just married their men, and that was all there was to it. Old Smokey did not even claim that kind of marriage. The man that fed her best and treated her right was the man she cooked for until one or the other changed his mind. Just now she was Diamond Joe's woman, but Diamond Joe was gambling his money away and losing his credit at the commissary.

Ruby never had any trouble with Yaller Jack's credit at the commissary. Yaller Jack was thrifty.

"Don't go buyin' no fancy grub for us to eat, Baby," Yaller

Jack warned. "Just a few cabbages and side meat and things. Cause de mo' us don't buy, de mo' quicker us gits dat house wid de chickens and chillun's and things."

Ruby laughed at that. She liked to hear her man talk that way. He was so big and stout, and she was so little and young. But when he talked that way she felt as if she was big, and he was little, and she had to pet him. She was proud of being Yaller Jack's woman—his regular woman, with a spell on him by the preacher and a fancy paper from the courthouse to prove it. "Ashes to ashes, Lawd, and dust to dust, Lawd." That was something! She snuggled over against him in their bunk while Yaller Jack slept and snored.

Lots of nights Ruby would lie awake and listen to the mosquitoes sing, and the frogs hollo, and the owls hoot. Occasionally a panther would scream from the dense canebrake a mile back in the big woods. But Ruby was not afraid. She had lived close to the big woods all her life.

What scared Ruby was the nights when it was too hot for the mosquitoes and frogs and owls, and everything got so quiet—everything except Yaller Jack's snoring. On these hot nights she would lie awake and listen—listen to nothing—and hear sounds coming from the canebrake—something rolling, rolling, rolling, with a steady swiny rumble that make her kinky hair pull at her scalp and her flat nose swell out like a spreading adder's head and sniff the hot air.

"Hit's de river witch ole Granny Lou always used to be tawkin' about," she decided, and she threw her arms around the sleeping Yaller Jack so suddenly and clung so tightly that he woke up.

"What de matter wid you, gal?" Yaller Jack demanded.

"I's skeered," Ruby whined.

"Ain't nothin' to be skeered at," he said. "Git on yo' side de bunk and git to sleep. I's tired. I been workin'."

Ruby rolled over and went to sleep. But the next morning she felt all unstrung and foolish. She did not wrap her hair in the tight coils that morning, and she laughed at things that did not tickle her. But the most foolish thing she did was to let the commissary clerk sell her a string of red beads. Ruby knew better than to buy those beads. Of course she wanted them. Any woman would want a pretty string of beads like that. So she bought them and wore them about camp, laugh-

ing and singing, laughing at foolish things that did not tickle her, and singing "pop-outs"—little songs that just popped out of her mouth with no conscious effort on her part.

"Me and my man, us had a fallin' out.
Don't nobody know what hit was about—
And hit ain't nobody's business but my own."

"Gal, whyn't you git back to yo' tent and wrop yo' haid befo' de year wigs git in yo' years?" It was Big Bess reproving her. "And singin' dem devil pops! And bless Gawd, ef'n she ain't done bought a string er beads! Gal, what's gittin' into you? I bet Yaller Jack takes a stick to you when he gits back. Dem beads costes six bits—and dat's a ha'f a day's wages out yonder in de hot sun. Come yar struttin' around wid yo' haid bushin' and singin' devil-pops! You better be singin' 'Jay bird, jay bird, hang yo' haid.' 'At's what you better had."

Ruby knew she should have been ashamed. But she wasn't. She just laughed and walked around in a little circle, singing:

"I done done all I kin do,
And I can't git along wid you—
I'm gonter git me another papa,
Show's yow bawn!"

"Crazy gal!" Big Bess exploded. "Singin' yo' man out while he's out yonder workin' for you. I bet I'm gonter tell him on you, and I bet he's gonter whup you good."

"Whyn't you let dat chile alone?" Smokey came to her rescue. Old Smokey usually minded her own business and let the other women mind theirs. But she sympathized with the young woman. "She ain't on'y jest cuttin' up," she continued. "She don't mean nothin'. Hit gits so hot and lonesome around yar sometimes, I want to sing out ev'y man I ever seed."

"But she's married wid Yaller Jack," Big Bess protested.

"Dat don't make no diffunce who she married wid," came back Smokey. "I seed a heap er young gals and I ain't never seed one yit which don't cut up some. I don't keer how many mens dey is married wid."

"But hit ain't no way to treat no husband," Big Bess insisted. "De Bible say you hadn't oughter pay no mind to no yuther man as long as yo' husband is workin' for you."

"She ain't payin' no mind to no yuther man—hit ain't no yuther man in camp to pay mind to."

"Well, anyways," Big Bess argued lamely, "de Bible say de devil'll git her for singin' devil pops."

"De devil ain't gonter git her till she die," Smokey came back, "and she's about de livest thing about camp dis day and time."

Ruby liked Smokey for taking her part. Deep down in her heart she knew it was wrong to sing songs while Yaller Jack worked out in the hot sun. But some way or other she could not help singing them. She clung closely to Smokey the rest of the day, singing foolish songs and listening to Smokey talk.

"I knows all about hit, gal," Smokey told her. "Hit's de spike cane sproutin' and de river rollin', what you hyars. Hit's de young willows growin' and de owls a-hootin', what you hyars. Hit's de snakes a-crawlin' and de varmints muskin'. I hyars hit my ownse'f sometimes, and hit makes me want to git naked and run out in de thickets. Some say hit's de jay birds totin' sand to hell. But hit ain't. Hit's de ole river witch tryin' to come betwixt you and yo' man."

Ruby was awed by the recital. But her eyes flashed.

"Any 'ooman try to take my Yaller Jack," she said, "I'd chop dey heart out—witch or no witch."

Smokey groaned mysteriously. "Sometimes de witch is a 'ooman and steals de man," she explained. "But when hit's a young gal like you, most er de time hit's a he-witch which steals de gal."

Ruby was greatly relieved. "I got a charm on me," she said. "Can't no man steal me away f'm Yaller Jack. I got a charm."

"He-witches used to steal me," confessed Smokey sadly, "but hit ain't payin' me no mo' mind. Hit's de she-witches now, stealin' my mens. Hit just got done stealin' Diamond Joe f'm me."

"You and Diamond Joe quit?" Ruby asked.

"I loved him too good," Smokey replied. "When you loves 'em a heap, dat's when de witch pull is de stoutest."

Ruby quit singing pop-outs and went to her tent. By the time Yaller Jack returned from work she had her hair neatly wrapped in coils and was thoroughly contrite. As soon as supper was over, she brought out the string of beads that she had hidden and handed them to her husband.

"I buyed 'em for six bits," she explained. "I hadn't oughter." She waited for Yaller Jack to beat her.

"Dey sho' is purty," Yaller Jack said. "Put 'em on, Baby. I bets you look good in 'em."

Ruby shook her head. "Dey costes six bits," she repeated, "and dat's a ha'f a day's wages out yonder on de levee. You oughter take a stick to me for buyin' 'em."

Yaller Jack looked from Ruby to the beads and back again. Ruby would look good in those beads.

"Put 'em on, Baby," he urged, "and let Yaller see how good-lookin' you is in 'em."

"Nawp." Ruby was determined. "You take 'em and sell 'em to some er de mens for dey womens which ain't savin' money, Yaller. Den when us gits our house and chilluns and things, I buys me some mo' beads."

Yaller Jack sold the beads to Diamond Joe for fifty cents, and the day following Urline wore them about camp, shamelessly, brazenly.

The next time Ruby went to the commissary the clerk asked her why Urline was wearing the beads. Usually the white men in camp paid no attention to the doings of the Negroes, or if they did they never said anything about it.

"My husband sold 'em," Ruby said.

The clerk looked at Ruby through half-squinted eyes. Ruby was not pretty. She was dingy black, with a big mouth and big eyes. Her nose was flat and her body was small and spindly. Her head was cymlin-shaped and her shanky legs stuck into her bare feet much closer to the toes than seemed necessary, leaving grotesque heels sticking out behind. But she was a woman and she was young.

"I got another string, and it's prettier than those," he said.

"I ain't buyin' no mo' beads," Ruby declared.

The clerk took a string of bright beads from a box and held them temptingly before Ruby's eyes. "I don't want you to buy them, gal," he said. "I might just give them to you."

The beads were pretty—prettier than the others, Ruby thought. But she did not like the way the clerk's voice sounded. She looked from the beads to the clerk's face. Then she understood. She did not know what it was, so she could not have explained it to anyone. She never could explain what it was that told her not to step over a fallen tree and upon the back of a cottonmouth moccasin that lay coiled there either, but she had never stepped upon the back of the deadly snakes that

lurked everywhere. She just saw something in the clerk's eyes that told her to get out of that tent as quickly as she could. And she bolted out, knocking over stacks of canned goods and cured meat as she ran.

Back in her tent, cooking for her man, Ruby soon forgot the incident and settled down, behaving herself just like any married woman should, spending her days in procuring and cooking food and gadding about with the women and her nights in feeding her man and watching him sleep. Seldom were a dozen words spoken between her and her husband during any given twenty-four hours. Yaller Jack would come in, hungry and tired. He would eat huge mountains of cabbage and great hunks of side meat and cornbread, and then stretch out on the bunk and sleep like a log until Ruby called him for breakfast.

On Sundays and rainy days there was no work. Ruby enjoyed these days most. She liked to talk to Yaller Jack and to hear him talk. Then, too, old Smokey always took her accordion over to the big forage tent and played, and the rest of the Negroes gathered about and sang. On Sundays they sang nothing but church songs:

Looked down de road and I seed de devil comin'—
I know de Lawd done laid His hands on me.
Snatched off my shoes and I beat de devil runnin'—
I know de Lawd done laid His hands on me.

Ruby led the singing with her shrill voice, and Yaller Jack "caught de tenors" splendidly, shading her high soprano notes into a weird harmony that made an impressive lead for the minor monotones of the others. And Diamond Joe sat back somewhere on a bale of hay and "bassed hit like a bullfrog wid his haid in a crawfish hole." When the songs got too mournful, Urline would shout, and Big Bess would preach and read out of her Bible, just like a regular preacher.

On rainy days they sang all sorts of songs—church songs, just plain songs, and regular bad songs:

When I wored my aprons low
You always hung around my do'.
Love, oh, love, oh, Kelly's love,
You pass my do' and you don't look in.

Of course a married woman had no business singing a song like that. It was a true love song. Big Bess wouldn't even sing "Johnnie and Frankie." Even Urline balked at singing "Soap and Water." But Ruby sang "Kelly's Love" and "Johnnie and Frankie," and when she and Diamond Joe got done singing that "Soap and Water" song there wasn't anything left to sing about.

Yaller Jack knew that the "Soap and Water" song was no song for any married woman to sing and he told Ruby it wasn't—told her right before everybody.

But Ruby didn't care. She and Diamond Joe were singing and old Smokey was playing, and Ruby went right on, sending her voice into a high, quivering tremolo. Old Diamond Joe's mouth flopped open like a channel catfish after a minnow, and he looked right straight at Ruby—with the same kind of look that the commissary clerk had given her.

But Ruby felt devilish that day, and the look did not tell her to run off. She just looked right back at Diamond Joe and made the next note whine at him. She wasn't afraid to sing "Soap and Water" with Diamond Joe, or any other man. "Ashes to ashes, Lawd, and dust to dust, Lawd." The preacher had said it, and she wasn't afraid. She giggled and backed off, facing Yaller Jack:

"Ruby and Diamond was a-singin' a song,
Yaller say, 'Don't, 'cause you know hit's wrong.'
Ruby tole Yaller, 'Ain't dat's a shame,
Cause you calls my singin' such a dirty name.'
'Soap and Water,' I said, 'Soap and Water.'"

That was a pretty good pop-out to sing at your husband, Ruby thought, and she started to giggle again. But she saw Yaller Jack look mean murder at Diamond Joe, and she knew what Yaller Jack meant by that look. And she knew what he meant when he grabbed her wrist and twisted her arm until it nearly popped out at the shoulder.

"Hit's all right, darlin'," she pleaded. "Hit's all right, Yaller. You know I ain't studdin' nobody but you, darlin'."

"I got eyes," Yaller Jack said roughly, and he twisted harder.

"But, darlin'," begged Ruby, "I ain't done nothin'. I

couldn't ef I wanted to. De preacher done said on me, Yaller. De preacher said."

"Said which?" Yaller Jack demanded.

"When us got married," Ruby explained. "De preacher say, 'Ashes to ashes, Lawd, and dust to dust, Lawd.' He said right on me——"

"Foolish," exploded Yaller Jack. "Dat's what dey say on daid fo'ks at de funerals." Lord, Lord, how that stout man could twist your arm!

Ruby looked panicky. She trembled before Yaller Jack's ugly frown. "Didn't de preacher said dat on me, sho' nuff, Yaller?" she pleaded. "He didn't said dat ashes to ashes charm on me when us gits married? Sho' nuff?"

"Co'se he ain't, Baby," Yaller Jack's anger was giving way to pity. "Co'se he ain't. Dat's a charm on de daid. Us ain't got daid when us got married, honey."

Ruby looked inquiringly at Big Bess. She had been married by a preacher.

"Dey says, 'Ashes to ashes, Lawd, and dust to dust, Lawd,' on de daid fo'ks on'y," she confirmed.

Ruby could hardly believe it. But Big Bess ought to know what she was talking about.

"What do hit mean, den, when you says hit on daid fo'ks?" she demanded. She couldn't see any reason in putting a charm on a dead woman.

Big Bess did not know what it meant. It was in the Bible, she explained, and that was all she wanted to know about it. Maybe old Smokey might know, but if anything was in the Bible that was enough for Big Bess to know about it.

"Hit's a charm," Smokey explained, "which keeps off de ha'nts." She waited for that to soak in and continued: "When somebody wants to does you somethin' and you kills 'em well, dey ups and ha'nts you." Everybody knew that, already. "But"—and Smokey paused again—"when somebody else kills 'em or dey just dies, like f'm de yaller janders or a snake bite, well, de ha'nt come right on and tries to do you jest like de person was tryin' to do you befo' he dies. Onless"—she paused once more to emphasize the exception—"onless you says, 'Ashes to ashes, Lawd, and dust to dust, Lawd,' and dat puts a charm on 'em and dey can't ha'nt you. So de fo'ks got in de habit er sayin' de charm on all

daid fo'ks 'cause you don't never know what's goin' on in a daid man's mind befo' he dies."

"But ef'n you kills 'em yo' ownse'f hit don't put no charm on de ha'nt or nobody?" Ruby pressed.

"Naw, 'cause you got de blood on yo' hands and de ha'nt kin smell de blood, I don't keer how much you charms. Hit's on'y for a natchal death like when somebody else kills 'em dat de charm work."

Ruby could not see any sense in that. It sounded foolish, and it robbed her of something. "Ashes to ashes, Lawd——" Ruby did not realize what a protection that charm had been to her until she suddenly found it had been no protection at all. "Ashes to ashes, Lawd, and dust to dust, Lawd"—a magic spell to make a young married woman safe? Humph! Nothing but words that they said on dead folks. "Diamond Joe ain't daid. He's about de livest man in dis camp, dis day and time," she decided. "And yar Yaller Jack paid three and a half for dat pair er co'thouse licenses and hired a preacher—jest for nothin'!"

That night when everything got quiet and she could hear that old river witch out in the canebrake pulling at her hair and making her feel mean, she cried and clung to Yaller Jack. "I don't keer ef'n hit ain't nothin' kin git me, Yaller," she begged. "I's skeered and I wants to stay like dis."

Yaller Jack felt sorry for her. "Hit's mighty hot to-night, Baby," he grumbled, "and I hits de levee at daylight. But ef'n you's sho' nuff skeered you kin lay agin me till you goes to sleep."

The next day Ruby hunted out Big Bess and made her read the Bible to her and sing and pray for her.

"Hit ain't no use in gittin' skeered when you's got de Lawd on yo' side," Big Bess consoled. "I got de Lawd on my side, and I ain't skeered."

"Do de Lawd he'p you hold yo' man?" Ruby pleaded.

Big Bess had boundless faith. But she was a woman—and she knew her Bible. "De Lawd," she explained, "ain't doin' nothin' for nobody which ain't doin' dey part. A 'ooman got to do ev'ything she kin befo' de Lawd gonter turn His hands."

They prayed and sang some more, and Ruby went away

feeling more secure in her relationship with her husband. But during the afternoon she got lonesome. It was one thing to know that the Lord was going to help you out, maybe, if you did everything you could to fight the river witch in old Diamond Joe. But it was better to see your own big, hard-working husband out on the levee, making a dollar and a half a day and saving his money. She walked to the edge of the clearing where the men were working and, half concealed behind a willow bush, she watched them. Yaller Jack was driving the team of big mules up and down the embankment, dragging dirt up there and dumping it from the slip and then driving down and loading again. There were a dozen or so other teams just like Yaller Jack's, but he was doing it better than the rest, Ruby felt certain. He had a way of just reaching down and lifting the slip handle so slightly that it looked as if he barely touched it, and the mules would walk right on and turn the slip bottom up. Then he just touched the handle again, and the slip jumped back right side up. It was so easy the way he did it—and all the time, walking along lazily, burying his bare feet to the ankles in the loose black dirt and singing as if he wasn't working at all. Singing about her:

“Workin’ on de levee,
Dollar fo’ bits a day—
Give my Ruby de dollar,
And lays fo’ bits away.”

Doggone it, it was something to have a man like that, even if you didn't have a charm on him! Fine-looking, brown-skinned man, singing about you and working for you! The biggest man on the job, too—except old Diamond Joe.

“Diamond Joe! Humph!” she snorted. “I don't see how come I got to come thinkin' about dat scound'el.”

She looked about for him. He was leaning against the handles of the big swamp plough that went through the dirt and roots and loosened things up so the slips could dig out the dirt. It was a big plough and took four big mules to pull it. But Diamond Joe was stout enough to hold on when it went bucking and jumping and jerking through the roots and under the stumps.

“Doggone old Diamond,” Ruby grinned, “he's a big man

and he's a stout man. He don't need no river witch to git in him. Dat scound'el is a natchal-bawn he-witch his ownse'f."

While Ruby stood there gazing fondly at Diamond Joe, she saw him reach down casually, pull a long cypress root from the ground, and strike with it.

"Snake," someone called, and immediately everyone started gathering around. Ruby joined the circle of men and watched with them while a long cottonmouth moccasin squirmed and writhed in death.

"Blind," offered Yaller Jack, eyeing the snake's head closely.

"Dog days make 'em like dat," Diamond Joe volunteered. "Dog days puts scales on dey eyes. I bet dat sucker was headin' for de river to git him a drink. Whey dey gits dry and mad, dey bites ev'ything dat dey tech. And kill you? Mankind! I bet hit's enough pizen in dat snake's haid right now to kill ev'y mule on de levee, let alone de mens."

"I seed a man git bit by a cottonmouf," commented one of the workers. "He jest bent hisse'f double and moaned once. Den he stretched out, stiff as a poker. Didn't had to put him on no coolin' boa'd. He was cold."

"Hi—you niggers!" It was the Walking Boss calling. "Get back to work. Get them teams started. We can't stop the job just because somebody killed a snake." Levees are built and repaired by the cubic yard of dirt moved.

The workers tore themselves away reluctantly and went to work—up the levee and down again. Diamond did not belong with that circle. He handled the big plough, and when there was no ploughing to be done he rested. When he and Ruby were left alone he looked at her and grinned—the same way he had grinned over in the forage tent.

"What you sayin', Good Lookin'?" he asked.

Ruby knew she should have hollered for Yaller Jack when he looked at her like that. She should have run, too. But she didn't. Maybe the old river witch was in Diamond Joe. Maybe "Ashes to ashes, Lawd" was all a mistake. But what did Ruby care?

"Soap and Water," she giggled.

Diamond looked worriedly toward Yaller Jack, now back at work, fifty yards away. He wasn't afraid of Yaller Jack, but then, there was no use in taking any chances. He picked up

the dead snake and stretched it, belly up, across the top of a stump. A man sleeps sounder when it is raining.

"Mo' rain, mo' rest," he grinned.

Ruby giggled. "You likes a heap er rest, don't you, Diamond?" she asked.

"I likes a heap er rain," said Diamond Joe. "I'm gonter watch out for dis yar snake's mate. Hit'll come along de same route befo' sundown. And I'll hang hit up, too. And den, just watch hit rain to-night."

The words they were saying sounded harmless enough. But both of them knew they were just saying words with their mouths. Ruby's mind was on this big, stout black man. And Diamond's mind was on this skinny, fresh, big-eyed young woman.

"I got my bunk down under dat big cottonwood back er de commissary, Good Lookin'," Diamond Joe said.

Ruby burrowed her big toe into the ground and looked shyly up at him from the corners of her eyes.

"Hit ain't nothin' to me does you got yo' bunk out in de river," she giggled, and walked off. But before she got ten feet away she started singing a pop-out:

"Diamond, Diamond, old black Diamond—
Come on and git me, Diamond Joe."

She went straight to her tent and started supper, putting a double portion of side meat into the cabbage.

"Dat'll make him sleep heavy," she said.

Her supper boiling away, Ruby quit the tent and sprawled flat on the ground under the live oak outside. She lay there for a long time, motionless except to fan away a horse fly or slap at a mosquito, listening to the silent rumbling of the young cane sprouting in the brake and breathing deeply of the alluvial odours that hung heavily on the still, steamy air. When everything got very quiet so that she felt her own veins and arteries throughout her body rising and falling with the rhythmic beat of her heart, she crooned a wordless little chant that sounded strange and weird to her.

"Wonder is dat river witch got in me, too?" she asked.

She sat up and listened. She heard nothing save the mosquitoes whining and an occasional chirp of a bird. There was

no one in camp except the other women and they were sleeping as was usual in the afternoon. A hundred yards or so away the men were working on the levee, but the thick undergrowth screened them from view.

Ruby peered intently toward where she knew Diamond Joe was leaning on the plough handles, and she saw something black moving in the edge of the clearing. It wasn't Diamond Joe, she decided, and she looked again.

"Buzzard," she announced. Then she laughed. "Lookin' to see kin I see ole Diamond and I sees a buzzard!" she laughed again. Buzzards were all right. They did not mean anything, and they were funny, too. Yaller Jack could mock them to a fare you well with his buzzard dance. He just laid his hat on the ground for the carcass and danced around it charily, like the king buzzard sampling the dinner for the rest of the flock.

"I looks to see ole Diamond," Ruby repeated, giggling to herself, "and I see de king buzzard gittin' after his rain snake!"

That was it! The buzzard was after Diamond's rain snake. That was something else again, and Ruby did not laugh.

"When somethin' monkeys wid a sign," she recalled, "hit's de worst kind er luck." Granny Lou had taught her that. And yet, Granny Lou had taught her that a buzzard was neither good luck nor bad luck. What about that? It was too intricate for Ruby's brain.

"I'm gonter see kin I git me a sign on hit," she decided, and she closed her eyes and held her breath.

Almost as soon as she did this, a robin started singing merrily from a limb in the cottonwood, down back of the commissary—singing in the tree right over Diamond Joe's bed! Ruby grinned triumphantly.

"Doggone!" she exclaimed. "Listen at 'at sassy scound'el. Jest like a answer to my prayer!" She knew a buzzard could monkey around all the signs that he wanted to. But the robin's song was brief. A jay bird heard him, the same as Ruby, and the jay bird went straight after that robin.

Ruby witnessed the brief flutter of leaves and she saw the robin flying for its life straight toward the river. Then she heard the dry, cackling chatter of the victorious jay bird. Instinctively she dropped to her knees and began to chant over and over in a fervent monotone:

"Jay bird, jay bird, hang yo' haid,
Flyin' on to hell wid a grain of sand."

That jay bird had sung over a bed, which meant Death was going to sleep in that bed! Death! That's what it meant. Granny Lou had said it. "When a jay bird sing over a bed," Granny Lou had told her time and again, "dat de sign Death gonter sleep in dat bed." That was what Granny Lou had said. But death for whom? Granny Lou hadn't said.

Ruby was scared. "Lawd, I wish Granny Lou was here right now, Lawd," she wailed. "What do hit mean, Granny Lou? Lawd, what do hit mean, Lawd?"

Desperately she closed her eyes and held her breath for another sign. But none came. She tried to reason it out in her mind, but it just got jumbled up and made her feel helpless and scared. She wished the Lord would help her, or Granny Lou, or anybody. Maybe Smokey would help her. She knew some of the signs.

Ruby dragged Smokey out of the bunk and bared her troubled soul to the older woman. Smokey closed her eyes and groaned mysteriously.

"Hit's yo' charm workin'," she explained. "Hit work slow and hard. But I don't keer what Big Bess say, ev' since dat preacher say 'Ashes to ashes, Lawd' on you, you been under a spell."

"But dat de daid charm," protested Ruby. "Yaller and Bess both say so. And Yaller say de preacher ain't said hit."

"Co'se hit's a daid charm," Smokey agreed, "and I don't keer ef'n de preacher didn't said hit, yo' gran'mammy said hit on you, didn't she? Well, hit jest means dat any man which come co'tin' at you besides yo' husband is gonter run into dat spell and he gonter die. Dat's all."

It was very clear to Ruby now. Diamond Joe had flouted that charm, and that was why the jay bird sang over his bed. Diamond Joe would die. Ruby was glad, too, because as long as Diamond Joe was alive he would witch her, and Yaller Jack never would believe anything about that charm.

"But on de yuther hand," continued Smokey sonorously, "Diamond sho' got de river witch in him, and he ain't gonter jest die by hisse'f."

Ruby's heart sank like a lump of lead. Then as suddenly it rose, and her eyes blazed.

"I got a mighty sharp razor," she said.

"And git Diamond's blood on yo' hands?" suggested Smokey. "He'll ha'nt you to de grave."

"Ha'nts is better'n havin' river witches stealin' you f'm yo' man," Ruby argued stubbornly.

"Worser," declared Smokey. "Besides, hit ain't yo' place to go cuttin' up ev'y man which makes eyes at you, is hit? Ain't you got a husband? Yaller Jack ain't lame."

Without another word Smokey dragged her bulky body back into the bunk and wrapped the mosquito netting around her head. Ruby knew Smokey had said everything she was going to say, so she went back to her tent, resigned to tell Yaller Jack and let him kill Diamond Joe.

"But what about Yaller Jack?" The question popped out of her head just like a devil song. "Wouldn't Diamond Joe ha'nt him, too? And maybe de white fo'ks puts him in jail and maybe hang him." White folks did that sometimes, when a man got to killing another man. It had all been so simple, and then suddenly it got all balled up again. Ruby could not straighten it out in her mind, so she closed her eyes and held her breath for a sign. The first thing she heard was Big Bess stirring around in her tent just below hers and Yaller Jack's. That wasn't the sign of anything. So she tried again. Then Big Bess started singing:

"I'm gonter make my troubles easy,
On my knees.
I'm gonter make my troubles easy,
On my knees.
I'm gonter git down on my knees,
I'm gonter say, 'Lawd, he'p me please.'
I'm gonter make my troubles easy,
On my knees."

That was it! The Lord would help her. But before the Lord helped her, Ruby would have to do everything she could for herself. It was so simple again. Ruby grinned.

"I wonder is dat yuther moccasin come crawlin' along, yit?" she said. She went to the forage tent and got a big grain sack.

When Yaller Jack came in from work that night Ruby sat

by his side proudly and ate the greasy, reddish-brown cabbage with him, dipping her hunk of fried hoecake into the "pot-licker" just as he did.

"You better eat dat fat meat," she said, "so's you kin sleep heavy and keep yo' strenk."

Yaller Jack chewed a while and then swallowed.

"Yeah," he said, "I better had."

That was all the conversation they had during the meal. They had eaten many meals on less.

As soon as they finished eating Yaller Jack crawled across the bunk. Before Ruby was through clearing the supper remains, he was sound asleep. As soon as she finished her brief dish washing and other chores she crawled into the bunk and lay down by his side. But she did not sleep. She just lay there and listened.

She heard Big Bess and her man crawl into bed. Then Urline and Yancey in the next tent down turned in and fussed for half an hour. Finally they hushed and everything got quiet. A bullfrog away back in the canebrake croaked voluminously and was silenced by the screech of a hawk. Presently another frog croaked more timidly. Another answered, and another and another took up the song. Soon the whole canebrake echoed with their throaty music. The night was young. Ruby waited.

Then, suddenly, as if some sylvan maestro had lowered his baton, the jungle symphony ceased. A soft gust of wind, heavy laden with pungent odours from the canebrake, pushed gently against the side of the tent and passed on to the river. Ruby wiped the perspiration from her face with the palm of her hand, and Yaller Jack stopped snoring long enough to open and close his mouth and swallow. Quiet again.

The moon climbed out of the river and over the levee. A katydid tried one squeaky, shrill note. A cricket answered, and another katydid tuned up. Then suddenly the whole place became alive with the wild, screechy fiddling of the insects, which lasted for half an hour.

When the katydids and crickets stopped, Ruby slipped noiselessly from the bunk and out of the tent. The moon was shining straight down through the treetops. It was not very light under the trees, but it was light enough. She walked straight to the big live oak and from its low fork she gingerly

picked up a grain sack, holding it well away from her body as she carried it.

As she made her way through camp to Diamond Joe's bunk she tried to hum Big Bess's song:

"I'm gonter say, 'Lawd, he'p me please.'"

But the words got mixed up and it didn't go so well. Then she changed it about and it went just like a pop-out;

"De Lawd say, 'Ruby, he'p me, please.'
I'm gonter keep my skillet greasy,
Show's yow bawn."

It may be wrong to sing pop-outs at the Lord, Ruby figured. But it just popped out.

"I's doin' my part," she reasoned, "and ef'n I does enough, well, den, de Lawd don't has to he'p me 'less He wants to. Dat's His business and hit ain't none er mine. I's doin' my part—all I kin."

"Dat you, sweetenin'?" Diamond Joe had been stretched out on his bunk waiting, and when Ruby approached, he sat up. "I thought you never was gonter git yar, gal."

Ruby could barely make him out against the dark shadow. She said nothing.

"Got yo' bundle wid you, too," he accused. "Gal, I ain't gonter run off with you. Come yar bringin' dat bundle er clothes." You had to be mannish with a gal like Ruby to make her love you.

Ruby edged up closer. "Hit ain't no clothes in dis bundle," she said.

"What is in hit? Give it yar!" Diamond Joe snatched the sack from Ruby's hand roughly, pulled the end of a string that loosed the slip knot, and turned the sack upside down greedily. The mate to the cottonmouth moccasin that he had killed that afternoon fell squirming and writhing into his lap.

Ruby turned without a word and went racing to her tent.

"I done ev'ything I could do," she said, crawling into her bunk.

With elbows resting on her knees and her chin buried in her cupped hands, Ruby sat there in her bunk, listening and waiting. Her straining ears caught a faint groan, she imagined, coming from the cottonwood tree. "He jest doubled up and

moaned once," the man had said that afternoon in describing a cottonmouth's victim.

Ruby waited and listened. Yaller Jack opened and closed his mouth and swallowed. A belated tree frog called timidly, and its mate answered from a near-by tree. Quiet again.

Then, from away back in the canebrake, came the mournful wail of a screech owl. Ruby shifted to a kneeling position, as if in prayer.

"Ashes to ashes, Lawd," she mumbled ceremoniously, "and dust to dust, Lawd." And with a fatigued yawn she stretched out on her side of the bunk and slept like a tired child.

EPISODE IN A MACHINE AGE

BY CAMBRAY BROWN

From Harper's

GEOFFREY LANE sat hunched over his typewriter. The keys flew. They beat a steady tattoo like a machine gun, raking the paper from one edge to the other as letters massed into words and words lengthened to lines. He was working with a grim persistence, as he had worked for weeks, and must still work for weeks. A stern, inexorable task, without respite. He must go on and on for what seemed an interminable time. He was quite unaware that the tension mounting within him had reached its limit, that catastrophe was at hand, that it awaited him at the end of the very next line.

"Then you really love me?" Eleanor exclaimed in a kind of awe. The starry light in her blue eyes deepened. . . Geoffrey had typed. He had reached the big love scene in his story, and he liked to do these fervent passages at top speed, touching up any shaky wording afterward. Now he shot the carriage back.

"Love you!" Raymond's words were like a caress upon her cheek as he held her close. . . .

Geoffrey paused for a fatal instant. He read the line over. It was terrible. Then suddenly something snapped within him. In a wave of utter revulsion he brought both fists down upon the keys in one tremendous, vindictive blow. The type bars leaped forward and piled upon each other in a tangled mass.

He leaned back and surveyed the ruin. And then he laughed—loudly, idiotically. He felt five years younger.

So this was what had been fermenting within him for weeks, slowly gathering to a bursting point. At first his writing had seemed only more irksome than usual. Serials were apt to take it out of you when you had to deliver an instalment

of ten thousand words every week. And this one had proved exceedingly recalcitrant and hard to get on with. He had lost his bearings more than once and let his story wander into impossible blind alleys, from which it could be extricated only by a tearing up of many typed sheets. Along with this wasted effort he had come to feel a violent loathing for every character in the tale. Even the starry-eyed Eleanor, whom he had thought at the start to be a charming creature, and toward whom he had cherished a secret tenderness, now elicited nothing but his smouldering contempt. She was a brainless and ridiculous minx, whom he would have delighted to kill off in the story—had he dared. He was also heartily sick of the tall, virile, blond Raymond (who had Viking blood in his veins), and the dark and cunning Duplain—he was sick of the whole silly pack of them and this romantic tangle in which they had become preposterously involved.

There had followed a violent urge to chuck it all and take himself off to Atlantic City for a few weeks' rest. The sea air would soothe his nerves and dispel this jaded feeling. Even the sight of the typewriter revolted him. He had come to loathe its unfeeling mechanical complexity, its cold efficiency. Machines! How he hated them! And this enforced slavery to them. If he could only escape from it all and for a few weeks breathe like a free man!

But with eight instalments yet to be delivered under his contract, that was out of the question. He didn't dare pause, no matter how fagged out he felt. Every seven days he was compelled to have more copy ready for that inexorable magazine, which went to press every week. It, too, was like a monstrous, unfeeling machine, insistently demanding to be fed. He had once viewed its gigantic presses in operation: whirring underground rooms, endless bolts of paper speeding like fleet white ribbons through a vast complexity of rollers, an acrid odour of printer's ink filling the air. He, too, was a part of that great intricate machine; he must continue to revolve because all the other wheels were revolving.

He confessed his plight to the editor when he called with his weekly instalment. Not that he hoped for reprieve or even sympathy from that overworked individual, whose eyes looked almost fishlike behind large spectacles. He, too, was merely a part of that diabolical machine, which couldn't stop, which

never would stop. For there were numerous rival publications, each of them likewise a monster machine, in a life-and-death competition with one another. Together they all made a sort of monster supermachine, in a still vaster universe of machines. . . . The thought made one giddy.

The editor, shooting a swift glance at the dark rings under Geoffrey's eyes, had privately surmised that Geoffrey would manage to hold out.

"Feeling a bit seedy, are you? Why don't you get away somewhere? With your typewriter, of course. Do your work in some quiet place."

Geoffrey had acted upon the suggestion in a dazed way. He had packed a suitcase, gathered up his typewriter and fresh quires of paper, and had fled from the heat of the city in July. He shunned the enticing shore places he was familiar with. Instead, he had gone to a town on the edge of the suburban zone which the editor had recommended. And he had quartered himself in the first boarding house he had found.

Immured in a second-floor room, there had issued therefrom, day after day, the unremittent clack of Geoffrey's typewriter. He emerged only at meal times and at irregular moments of respite when he visited the town centre to purchase tobacco for his pipe and more aspirin for his bedrugged head. He made no effort to get acquainted with the other boarders, who adjudged him a morose and unsociable person. They could never have comprehended that this thin, tired-looking young man was in reality a part of a machine—a vast, pitiless machine, which had come to fill all the universe, and which must go on revolving endlessly. They, too, were a part of that same super-machine, even if they didn't have sense enough to know it. . . . Geoffrey smiled superiorly to himself at the thought, and the boarder watching him across the table wondered if he might not be a little queer in the head.

Three weeks dragged by. It seemed to Geoffrey that he had lived for months in that square, shabby room. His depression darkened and deepened. His head felt queer and light, and it frequently ached. The story went forward by sheer mechanical effort. At times he sat inactive and gloomed at the typewriter. It had become a symbol of that greater world machine, of which he was a helpless part. Its swift response to his touch only irritated him. Now, when the story stalled and

words refused to come, it seemed to mock him. For the first time he observed the entrails of its mechanism. He peered down into all the queer jointed parts which he didn't understand but which miraculously integrated into activity at a mere touch upon the keys.

And he had to keep hammering at those keys, unceasingly hammering at them. He was no longer a free man but a slave. The typewriter, for all its sleek responsiveness, was his master. It had become a grim and exacting presence. Whenever he entered the room there it was, waiting for him. When he loafed for half an hour, stretched on the bed with pipe and newspaper, he could feel its silent rebuke. He could even imagine its fiendish glee in knowing that he had to crawl back to it, tear out the messed-up sheet and begin again. . . .

And now at last, in a swift instinctive moment of rebellion, he had struck for liberation. A queer sense of release immediately swept over him. He leaned back and surveyed the havoc he had wrought by a simple impulsive act. He laughed at the sight of the tangled, piled-up type bars. He had put an end to the machine's cursed domination over him. He gloated over its stricken helplessness.

He got up from the chair and stretched his arms. At last he was a free man. What time was it? Nearly six o'clock. He put on his hat, pulling it down to a challenging angle over one eye—a gesture indicative of his new estate. He observed the effect in the glass and laughed again. Then he swaggered blithely forth.

He walked several blocks in the glow of his new-found liberation. It was as if he trod on air—his feet felt as light as his head. He had struck at the infernal scheme of things and found it surprisingly easy. Why didn't the whole human race rise up and smash once for all this intricate linkage of machine with machine which held them enslaved? He couldn't feel really free until everyone else was free. And no one but himself as yet realized how easily it could be accomplished.

The blast of a whistle smote his ears. He looked up to take note of his surroundings; grimy brick walls, topped by smudgy smokestacks, and a white wisp of steam escaping with reverberant sound. It was a factory of some sort, and this was the moment of shutting down. Another humanity-enslaving machine! They had spread everywhere, even to the outskirts

of these suburban towns. The great octopus of mechanized industry was insinuating its tentacles into every locality, snatching more and more people into its maw of senseless, endless production.

Above the windows of the detached office building large gilt words caught Geoffrey's eyes: COMMENDABLE TYPEWRITER COMPANY, INC.

The letters seemed to dance before his astonished gaze. His own machine, a "Commendable," had come from this very plant. He halted to stare at the gloomy buildings, all his animosity toward his own typewriter now intensified and concentrated upon this place where thousands of other typewriters just like it had been manufactured. All these men and women who now streamed forth from their prisonlike confinement had been making typewriters. Helpless victims in the toils of the machines they tended, they were compelled to make still other machines, which would enslave still more people. That was the insidious feature of the whole diabolical scheme of things in a Machine Age.

Geoffrey felt his gorge rise. He wanted to halt the drab, tired throng around him, exhort them to stop making machines, open their eyes to the silly enshackling chain they were all endlessly weaving for one another. Carried along in the crowd, he began to compose to himself dramatic, ringing sentences. He imagined himself lifted above this crowd of workers, who listened to his ringing words and repeatedly interrupted him with cheers. . . .

Someone in the crowd jogged his elbow. He noticed at his side a short, beaten-looking man in rather shabby clothes. He was wearing a cap over thin, grayish hair, and his eyes, set in a dark, furrowed face, were a palish blue. His moustache was gray, formidable, and unkempt. Suddenly he spoke:

"It's a bloomin' shame!"

He had not addressed Geoffrey. He was merely muttering aloud to himself.

"It's a bloomin' shame!" he repeated. "I won't stand it."

Geoffrey's interest was stirred. This sounded like the true note of rebellion.

"That's the way to talk!" he said approvingly.

The man lifted a tired stare and inspected Geoffrey. }

"I won't stand it!" he said again.

"*Don't* stand it!" urged Geoffrey.

They had halted, while the crowd streamed by. The workman was regarding Geoffrey with suspicious eyes. Some inarticulate doubt within him seemed suddenly dispelled.

"Let's go and get a drink."

"The very thing," agreed Geoffrey.

They moved off across the street toward a small shop which contained a lunch counter. Passing through to the rear they sat down at a table.

"Two real ones, Gus," said Geoffrey's companion to the red-faced German in a soiled apron who had followed them into the room. The latter departed to return a moment later with two unlabelled bottles. A dark brew foamed in the thick, heavy glasses.

"It's a bloomin' shame!" said the workman in his lugubrious tones, wiping flecks of froth from his ragged moustache.

Geoffrey nodded agreement over his glass. He divined in the other a soul ground down by the heartless tyranny of the established industrial order.

"I'm an expert mechanic, I am," went on the other. "My name's Kent. I've earned good pay for nigh on to forty years and now they've got machines that do everything."

Machines! Geoffrey felt a thrill go over him. Here was fresh damning testimony as to what was wrong with the world and would eventually wreck it.

"They don't need men like me no longer." Mr. Kent continued to pour forth his woes. "All they need is wops or just kids, to stand and feed their bloomin' machines. No use for brains. All the brains has gone into the machine. You just stand and feed it."

"Now you've said something!" Geoffrey agreed. The sting of the beverage was already mounting pleasantly within him. He felt his kinship with this aged toiler who had lived on into the evil days of a degenerate age. Geoffrey beat on the table with his glass to emphasize his words.

"Down with machines! That's what's the matter with the world. Too many machines! We're just slaves to them. Can't the human race see that? Can't they see what it's all coming to?"

"People are just fools," observed Mr. Kent pessimistically. "Now, I'm an expert mechanic——"

"We've got to wake them up!" Geoffrey announced with conviction. His head no longer ached. Instead, a strange glow and an eagerness to liberate his fellow men infused him. "We must start a drive or something."

"It don't pay to start anything." Mr. Kent shook his head with the conservatism of the disillusioned and stared despondently into the depths of his glass. His own unhappy plight still filled his thoughts.

"I always feel this way around six o'clock," he explained. "I've made good wages, I have, for nigh on to forty years, and now I'm just feedin' a machine."

"That's too bad."

"Too bad?" Mr. Kent sniffed. "It's worse than that."

"Have another drink," suggested Geoffrey.

Mr. Kent turned to speak over his shoulder. "Two real ones, Gus." His mournful eyes again fastened upon Geoffrey. "I'm tellin' you. All day long. . . . It ain't a man's job."

"Monotonous, eh?"

Mr. Kent considered the word for a moment and his lips curled in disgust. He bent over his refilled glass for a long moment and came up with the inquiry: "Ever see a Commendable Typewriter?"

Geoffrey replied that he owned one.

"I've often wondered where all those fool machines went to," said Mr. Kent, as if the mystery of their distribution were now explained. "Well, you know there's a lot of parts in one of them machines. Type bars, rocker bars, escapement arms, levers, ratchets——"

"Yes, I know," said Geoffrey.

"Well," said Mr. Kent, working up to his climax, "what part do I make? Anything that calls for skilled work?" He paused for emphasis. "Nothin' of the kind. I stand and feed a sheet of metal into a machine that at one crack stamps out the spacing bar—the one part of a typewriter that ain't nothin' at all. Just makes the gap between words."

Mr. Kent's look of disgust was suddenly occluded behind his lifted glass. "I'm an expert mechanic, I am," he resumed, wiping his ragged moustache, which drooped like himself. "And that's what I've come to. Spacing bars! Good for nothin' but to make a sign of nothin'!"

"That's too bad," murmured Geoffrey.

"You said that before," Mr. Kent pointed out gloomily, and then drained his glass. He turned his head and called in his melancholy voice: "Two real ones, Gus."

Geoffrey contemplated the degradation to which Mr. Kent had been reduced by a Machine Age. He was the ignominious slave to a pulseless machine, for whose product he could feel no respect. Spacing bars! "Good for nothin' but to make a sign of nothin'." Geoffrey felt hot revolt growing within him at all the outrages which mechanical tyranny worked against life. And he was in a mood to do something about it. At one blow he had struck off his own shackles, and his further duty seemed clear. Revolutions that had changed the history of the world had started from beginnings as inconspicuous as this. The thought sent new and unsuspected strength coursing through his veins.

"Every night at six o'clock I feel this way," went on Mr. Kent. "I ain't going to stand it another day. I'm through!" There was a savage vigour in the sudden resolve.

"I'm through, too!" Geoffrey warmly agreed. He pounded his empty glass upon the table. He felt like the initial signer of some new Declaration of Independence that would shake the world. He and Mr. Kent would go forth and fight the Universe, if need be, to a bitter but triumphant end. "Let's shake hands on it!"

They shook hands on it. Mr. Kent turned again to call over his shoulder: "Two real ones, Gus. And make it snappy."

But the aproned figure in the background shook his head. Mr. Kent seemed dashed. He looked aggrieved.

"Let's go somewhere else," suggested Geoffrey.

"I'm an expert mechanic, I am," came the words, like a familiar refrain, but now in tones of bellicose assertion.

Geoffrey had lost count of the number of times Mr. Kent had advanced this declaration. He had lost count also of the hours that had elapsed since their fortunate meeting with each other. He recalled, as if through a haze, the various places they had visited. But they were now sworn, inseparable friends, and Mr. Kent was fired with Geoffrey's spirit of revolt against the existing social order which had allowed machines to become the masters of men. The precise steps to be taken in liberating mankind had not yet been worked out—there had

been interruptions in the discussion as they abandoned one place and moved on to another. But these future considerations were only matters of detail. Of more immediate importance was the fact that Mr. Kent was done forever with the degrading task of stamping out spacing bars, and Geoffrey likewise was done forever with the ignoble drudgery of hammering upon one.

Spacing bars! . . . "Good for nothin' but to make a sign of nothin'."

The ignominy of it had seared the soul of the now liberated Mr. Kent. He spat vindictively. The future boded ill for machines. Mr. Kent itched to come to grips with the issue in some immediate tangible way. In each place they entered he looked challengingly about for adversaries hostile to the New Day, and from time to time, as his eye fell upon some unsuspecting individual, he confided to Geoffrey in an undertone, "I can lick him."

"Not in here," cautioned Geoffrey.

"Then tell him to come outside," breathed Mr. Kent heavily.

The place in which they now sat appeared to be a sort of restaurant, but the hour was late and only one table remained occupied. A birdlike little man, with bushy eyebrows and a nose like a curved beak, still lingered over his coffee. He was too insignificant to arrest Mr. Kent's wide-ranging regard. Geoffrey, eager to spread the new gospel, caught the little man's eye. He lifted his glass.

"Won't you join us?"

The little man seemed to hesitate, then brightened at the glass held invitingly aloft, and got up from his table.

"This is Brother Kent," said Geoffrey to the newcomer. "I am Brother Lane. And you are——?"

"My name is Fletcher."

"Sit down, Brother Fletcher." Geoffrey rapped for the waiter.

"Down with the tyranny of machines!" Mr. Kent boomed aloud, and then turned challengingly to the newcomer. "How about it—you?"

Mr. Fletcher blinked uneasily. "I'm in the barbers' supply business, but I guess I know what you mean." He took up his glass and tasted it. "But my chief work—my avocation,

I might say—for fifteen years has been a definitive study of compound words.”

“Here’s to compound words! And none better!” Geoffrey lifted his glass to the stranger.

Mr. Fletcher seemed pleased with the compliment and ventured a bolder drink.

“You gentlemen may not be aware of the chaos which the English language betrays in this respect——”

“I’m an expert mechanic, I am,” Mr. Kent informed the newcomer.

The latter nodded an amiable assent. “But what may have escaped the attention of both you gentlemen—indeed, the general public is almost criminally ignorant of this vast problem in English orthography——”

“Listen, brother. For nigh on to forty years——”

“But I want you to get this point. Take a familiar species of bird. Do you write *blackbird* as a single word, or *black-bird* with a hyphen, or *black bird* as two separate words?”

“Precisely right!” agreed Geoffrey. “The public is criminally ignorant. It’s the tyranny of machines——”

“To illustrate my point,” Mr. Fletcher persisted, “won’t one of you gentlemen mention a compound word—any double word you happen to think of?”

“The bee’s knees!” was Geoffrey’s sudden inspiration.

“Excellent!” Mr. Fletcher beamed and consulted some manuscript pages of notes which he drew from his pocket. “But *beeswax* is a single word!” He looked around triumphantly. “Could anything be more inconsistent and illogical?”

“Something’s got to be done about it!” Geoffrey declared warmly. He lifted his glass but discovered that it was again empty. He rapped for the waiter.

Mr. Fletcher had turned to Mr. Kent. “Now you think of a word.”

But Mr. Kent drew back suspiciously. “Hell’s bells!” he began in disgust. “Say, you——”

“Again excellent! *Hell’s bells*—two distinct words. But you write *hell-bent* with a hyphen!”

“You’ve said it,” agreed Geoffrey. “Hell-bent. That’s what we are—all the world—unless we do something. Get rid of the machines——”

"Are you with us or against us?" Mr. Kent leaned intimidatingly toward the newcomer.

"Why, with you, heart and soul," Mr. Fletcher flutteringly assured him. "Gentlemen, I have given fifteen years to the study of this involved subject. I have come to realize that the space or lack of space between words is often more important than the words themselves."

"Just think of that!" said Geoffrey.

"And hence the spacing bar, which this other gentleman mentioned a few moments ago, is to an enlightened and discriminating public the most important adjunct of the modern typewriter."

Mr. Kent turned his eyes upon the speaker as if now beholding him for the first time. "Just say that again."

"Upon the spacing-bar," the other went on, "depend all the ultimate niceties of correct writing. For without the spacing bar how could you discriminate between the familiar *blackbird* and a *black bird*—that is, a bird that is merely black?"

Mr. Kent straightened up, as if upon a peak in Darien.

"Why, if there wasn't no spacing bar to make spaces between words, the letters 'ud all run together!" he announced his private discovery.

"That is correct," Mr. Fletcher assured him. "Just imagine!"

Mr. Kent struggled to imagine the resultant chaos in a world bereft of spacing bars. And suddenly his face darkened with new grievance against the Machine Age.

"Here I've been making spacing bars—thousands of 'em!—for their bloomin' typewriters—and what credit did I ever get? Will you tell me?"

Mr. Fletcher was soothingly optimistic. "We must look forward to a more appreciative and enlightened age——"

"We're starting it here and now!" declared Geoffrey. "Here's to the New Day!"

Three lifted glasses, after some wavering quest of one another *en plein air*, effected a clinking contact.

"If it wasn't for spacing bars——" Mr. Kent muttered, with a sense of personal injury, and seemed to collapse inwardly at the thought "What a helluva mess!"

"Gentlemen," began Geoffrey formally, as if taking the

floor for a speech. "In this unhappy age humanity has become the bond-servant of machines——"

"Ah, yes, take the word *bond-servant*," Mr. Fletcher eagerly put in. "You might think the formation the same as *bond salesman*——"

"Let's have a song," proposed Mr. Kent. He cleared his throat and began quaveringly, "For it's always fair——" and then abruptly desisted.

"I have rarely had the pleasure of such intelligent listeners," said Mr. Fletcher, who was fast warming up to the spirit of good-fellowship at the table. He lifted his glass and beamed upon the other two, with eyes that seemed to be slipping a little out of focus.

"Intelligent! I'll say we're intelligent," declared Mr. Kent. "We're free men. We're mancipatedated—emancipated. Who says we ain't?" He glared belligerently around for dissenters, but encountered only the stony eye of the waiter. "I'll lick anyone that——"

"That's the spirit!" Geoffrey applauded. "Let's go forth and face the world!"

"I'll lick anyone that——" Mr. Kent repeated, eyeing the waiter, and then broke off, for the waiter was approaching and eyeing him.

Mr. Kent had inadvertently brushed with his elbow Mr. Fletcher's manuscript notes on compound words. Some of the sheets fell to the floor. In stooping to recover them Mr. Fletcher lost his balance and pitched forward.

"Time to close up, gents," announced the waiter coldly. The set of his chin and the muscles of his jaw indicated that the statement was not open to debate.

"I can lick——" began Mr. Kent, but Geoffrey caught him by the arm.

"Let's go forth and face the world!"

And after Mr. Fletcher had been assisted to his feet they did so.

The cool night air blew upon their faces.

Along dark and silent streets the trio proceeded, with arms linked together in a common brotherhood. They formed a solid if somewhat wavering phalanx. A custodian of the law, making his midnight round, regarded them with indifference. He

did not dream that here stalked the advance guard of a New Day, with whom the Machine Age had soon to reckon.

Softly, insidiously, the cool night air blew upon their faces. It filled their lungs with slow, imperceptible effect. There fell a silence broken only by the tread of feet in unison upon the pavement and an occasional snort from Mr. Kent as he sniffed the ozone.

After a dozen blocks Defection suddenly lifted its head. Mr. Fletcher's steps began to lag, and he disengaged his arms from the linked triumvirate. "I shall have to be leaving you here," he announced weakly. "This is where I turn off."

Geoffrey halted sharply. He gazed in indignant surprise upon the craven figure of Mr. Fletcher, and abruptly he envisaged him in a new light. The custodian of compound words seemed to have dwindled to a timorous, shrinking creature. After all, Geoffrey appraised him scornfully, the New Day could expect nothing from so insignificant a little shrimp.

"Good-night, sir," said Geoffrey in curt dismissal.

"Night," echoed Mr. Kent.

The little band, shorn of one third of its forces, bravely pushed on.

Nevertheless, it was a setback. Geoffrey, clutching his lone companion's arm, felt his ardour dampened. It was as if something had gone out of the evening, as if the spirit of the occasion was evaporating beyond reclaim. In heavy silence the two proceeded for several blocks.

The cool night air continued to blow upon their faces. Mr. Kent, imbibing the ozone, at every tenth step expelled it forcibly like a hoarse exhaust.

Suddenly Geoffrey remembered his story. It popped into his thoughts out of nowhere. And at the same instant a different turn to the love scene flashed upon him. He felt a thrill. He began to dramatize the new action; the dialogue came leaping to his mind without effort. He experienced a familiar, old-time glow. This was great stuff, which would almost write itself. The story would be a "wow" yet! In the feverish throes of renewed creation he began to quicken his stride. He must get back to his typewriter at once while the thing was alive within him and quivering to be written down.

They were almost at Geoffrey's door when Mr. Kent drew back and came to a halt. Geoffrey had completely forgotten

about Mr. Kent. Now he discovered that the boarding house next to Geoffrey's was Mr. Kent's modest place of domicile. The latter took off his cap and began to inspect its lining.

"Got to be at the factory at eight o'clock sharp," he mumbled. It was a lame and laboured farewell.

"Of course you have," Geoffrey agreed, eager to reach his own door.

He mounted blithely to his room. It was after midnight, but time was no matter. He must get forward with this smashing new turn to his story. And then, as he switched on the light, he beheld the typewriter—the type bars piled up in a hopeless mass. Damnation! Now he remembered. He must have been crazy! Vainly he strove to extricate the tangled mechanism, but it resisted all his efforts—and the story was boiling within him! Damnation!

Suddenly he had an inspiration. He went to the window and looked out. Yes, there was a light, on the second floor, gleaming from the darkened house next door. Geoffrey caught up some small object to hurl at it and whistled sharply.

The shade was raised and Mr. Kent peered uneasily out.

"I'm goin' to bed," came a protesting voice. "I gotta be up early."

"You're an expert mechanic, aren't you?" Geoffrey reminded him. "Then come over and fix this typewriter!"

AN EPISODE AT PINTAIL LAKE*

By IRVIN S. COBB

THE gang at Starbuck's back a mile from the river were joking that comical old cooter of a Joe Sam Flint about his prized new badge and his ten-dollar diplomy, or whatever it was you called the fool contrapshun just before this stranger, young Gaul, ran up, dripping wet and panting, with the word that his friend was drowned in Pintail Lake.

Their humour was of a primitive but searching order. They conceded Uncle Joe Sam to be a master hand at tolling turkeys into range with a wing-bone yelper; for the sake of the argument they admitted that he seemed to understand the ways of fox-squirrels better than the fox-squirrels themselves did. But granted that much, still they desired—as one inspired spokesman put it—to know this: what excuse could an old, ignorant, red-necked, hard-shelled, wool-hatted tarrypin of a hillbilly such as he was, that hadn't never been nowheres and hadn't never seen nothing, have to go pestering around acclaiming to be one of these here regular detecatives?

That was what these genial loafers desired to hear and asked for and loudly clamoured for, with frequent interpolations of barbed elemental wit by this homespun jester and that. As the startling interruption came, their indignant prey stoutly was defending his authority as derived by mail and for a price from the Argus International Detective Agency & Correspondence School at Portland, Maine, U. S. A., and likewise his potential merits for the proposed career of his declining but maturer years.

Conceded that he couldn't read very much, if at all, his daughter could; and she had read to him what the printed

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instructions sent through the post office said about detecting crime and catching criminals; and he had remembered a good part of it; maybe half, possibly two thirds. Moreover, if a man devoted his lifetime to studying the secret habits of the wild things, it was only common sense to assume that he'd be able to figure out the hidden motives and the hidden doings of human creatures better than the run of people, now, wasn't it? Or, anyway, words to that effect.

Flurried but positive, he was diving head first into a counter tide of derisive laughter when just then there appeared this man, Herbert Gaul, all soaked and agitated, crying out of his friend's death and begging for help.

At that they all sobered down and jumped up from where they had been lounging at the front of the store and hurried back with the stranger over the Crooketty Creek road. Uncle Joe Sam went too, but at a slower gait than the rest, he having rheumatic swellings in his elderly legs. He carried along his old double-barrelled scatter gun. As a confirmed hunter he carried it about with him nearly everywhere. Now, though, he seemed to regard it as an added credential, a token, so to speak, signifying an armed and militant vigilance against lawbreaking.

He hobbled along the best he could, but by the time he got down to the fog-covered lake which lay in the lowland paralleling the river, plans for dragging already were under way. There was need for haste. According to the survivor the accident had occurred less than half an hour earlier, and several there professed to know of cases when the breath was pumped back into lungs which had been under water longer even than half an hour.

Immediately, with a sort of improvised dredge, they scraped and raked over a roughly designated area but brought up only mud and weedy stuff and dead branches of trees. Eventually the quest would take on a systematized aspect, with orderly direction to it, with groups working under the loose command of Wallie Starbuck, the storekeeper. That though was to follow after they had given up hope of saving a life and were moved by the size of the reward which Gaul offered for the recovery of the body.

Now, at this present confused and exciting stage, nearly every fellow offered suggestions which conflicted with nearly

every other fellow's suggestions, and nobody was heeding any of them. In forty minutes enough advice to raise a sunken battleship went absolutely to waste. Starbuck did show some qualifications for leadership.

He sent a messenger back to his place for dynamite and adequate coils of rope—thus far they had been using a skiff's painter—and to the blacksmith's on beyond his place for bent iron to make proper grapnels of. He called for volunteers who would strip off and risk pneumonia by diving for the dead man.

While awaiting the runner's return, Gaul repeated for Uncle Joe Sam's benefit his account of the drowning. Coming down he already had told and retold it. But the oldest man of the lot had been trailing them far behind. Also, being spavined and slow-motioned, he had the wisdom to stay outside the orbits of active coöperations on the part of the crowd. At the first opportunity he engaged Gaul, saying he desired to learn the details, if it wasn't too much trouble, and Gaul, who had grown measurably calmer, very willingly obliged him.

"There's not very much to it, awful as it is," began Gaul, speaking in that curious foreign way of his. He was from up North somewhere, as Uncle Joe Sam had heard, but even if he hadn't heard could have guessed from the other's manner of accenting and pronouncing his words. "We were over in that blind there on the far side. Two ducks came out of the fog and flew in toward us over the decoys—the second batch we'd seen this morning. I shot twice and missed both times—I'm not much of a shot. Mr. Pettigrew dropped his, though, with his second barrel. Considering that he was sixty-five years old and wore glasses he was pretty good at that sort of thing—not an expert gunner but fair."

"Yep, I heard the shootin' back up on the bluff whar me and the other boys wuz," stated Uncle Joe Sam. "You-all shot about a half-hour or so before that, though—three barrels that time, fust one, and then in a second or so two more, sort of clos't together."

"Yes, we didn't get anything then—the fog was too thick to make them out," explained Gaul. "Well, as I was saying, Mr. Pettigrew had one bird down. I think that must be it floating off there."

His audience of one peered where he pointed to a seemingly

faraway dot on the surface. Distant objects were revealing themselves now as the fog shredded away. It had been very heavy; now it was disappearing fast.

"That's it," pronounced Uncle Joe Sam after prolonged scrutiny; "looks small. Must be a green-wing or mebbe one of these here summer ducks—what up in your country they'd likely call wood ducks. It's drifted out a right smart piece frum whar it spilled, ain't it?"

"It started drifting as soon as it struck. Besides, it wasn't quite dead then. It fluttered and splashed, sort of kicked itself along; and after it died and quit kicking, the wind carried it still farther away. Well, anyway, we crawled into that cranky little skiff that we borrowed, to go out and pick it up. I was handling the oars. Mr. Pettigrew was in the stern. I manœuvred to get up alongside the dead duck. It was about out there." Again he aimed an index finger. "Yes, as nearly as I can tell it was just about there that we caught up with it. I let the skiff come around broadside and tried to scoop it in with one of the oars. But I missed. So I said to Mr. Pettigrew that he'd better grab it as it went by.

"He leaned over to the left—like this—trying to reach it. He must've leaned too far, or it's possible that just at that second he had one of his attacks of dizziness. He was subject to them—something like vertigo, I guess it was—if he over-exerted himself or even if he stooped his head. At any rate, it tipped suddenly, the skiff, I mean, and began to dip water—a lot of water—over the gunwale. And before I could think to throw my body in the other direction in an effort to right her I was in the lake and so was he, and the skiff was bottom-side up.

"I went clear under, and went down deep, too, being weighed down with these heavy hunting clothes and this pair of rubber hip boots. He was dressed the same way. When I came up he was gone—not a sign of him. I swam around a little while—not very long, though—hoping his head would show. I didn't dare try to dive for him, outfitted the way I was—I'm just a fair swimmer and I felt like I had tons hanging to me. So when his head still didn't show I got hold of the capsized skiff and steered her across to this bank and ran up to the store for help.

"There's two fine guns lost, but I'm not thinking of them,

of course. I'm thinking of the terrible finish of his trip and the fact that I've lost the best friend I ever had in this world, or ever expect to have. I've been his private secretary for twelve years, ever since I came out of college, and he was almost like a father to me. He didn't have any sons of his own or daughters either—only two nieces and one nephew and a few distant relatives."

"Pity you had to turn over out whar it's the deepest," commented Uncle Joe Sam, his face and voice gravely sympathetic. "Effen it'd 'a' happened ten rods clos'er to the bank you could 'a' teched, standin' on your tiptoes."

"It must have been fate. Well, all I can hope for now is that they'll find the—the remains. You think they will, don't you?"

"Well, they oughter. Ef them hooks don't ketch onto his clothes a blast of dynamite mout fetch him up—it gin'elly does. And ef that should fail he oughter rise by hisself inside of three or four days even with the lake water ez coolish ez 'tis now—the gases, you know—they'll lift him. That is, without he gits lodged fast amongst some brush or wedged-in-like under a sunken log down in a deep part. I've knowed of sech things."

"I'm afraid of that myself," admitted Gaul. "I've got a sort of feeling about it."

He stole a covert quick glance at his present companion. The old man's face was seamed with lines of gravity; his faded-out eyes were pondering on the squads of searchers where in front yonder they circled in two boats—a tricky dugout and a small skiff which had been found upturned and oarless in a shallow near at hand. The oars had been picked up some distance away toward mid-lake. Absently Uncle Joe Sam lifted a flap of his unbuttoned vest and breathed upon the preposterous lettered disk of imitation silver which he wore pinned over his left breast, and next he polished at it with the sleeve of his coat. He uttered a series of small clucks betokening regret and commiseration.

The man Gaul gave an inward heave of deep self-satisfaction. It was going to be no harder to hoodwink this hobbling ancient than it had been befooling those other deluded natives. Going to be?—that was wrong. It already was. A pack of innocents, that was what these yokels here in the bot-

toms of this Tennessee River were. Who was it said that murder must always out—that a murderer, no matter how shrewd his design or how finished his execution of it, always left some betraying clue behind? Whoever it was, he was wrong. Behold, here was one murder about which there had been no slip-up—or only one, and it didn't count—no mischance, no thing undone, no thing overdone. It had been snugly, surely accomplished and swiftly and accurately and completely.

This was what Herbert Gaul exultantly was saying to himself as now he sat him down on a log and drew off his sloshing boots. He did not feel as though he had just got through with committing premeditated murder. He felt like a man who has been bidden to a noble feast. A glow of pleasure for a perfect and balanced achievement flowed up out of him and spread through him and filled him, brain and heart and body. It was as though an artist sat and admired his own masterpiece.

At a certain stage of the undertaking he had been physically very sick; at another had been seized with quick, almost panicky misgivings as to the success of its outcome. And before that when he first was putting his hand to it a mounting swell of doubt, call it irresolution, had for a moment, but only a moment, threatened his forces of decision.

That, though, was all past and over and done with; that was all safely behind him. Within himself he tested his nerves. Taut but not too taut, they responded like violin strings that strum their answer to the finger of a musician. A great confidence, a great strength and steadiness possessed him. Also, and on fuller thought of the transaction, there was with this a fine proud sensation, a sense of self-appreciation for having so readily and so powerfully mastered two separate and difficult contingencies—really they had been unforeseen emergencies—which had arisen in the midst of his job. Why, he had been a regular calculating machine, clever at the preliminary forecasts, prompt to take up the slack ends of things.

All he had to do now was just stand fast and let the events, as he had provided both for and against them, take their natural courses, he meanwhile to counterfeit just the properest most plausible air of a man stricken with a great grief yet not stricken beyond powers of manly self-control and not shaken past the ability to meet a lamentable, tragical situa-

tion and still carry on. Like a chemist mixing a delicate compound in the peace of a quiet laboratory, he decided what looks to wear, what phrases to repeat, what emotional proportions to emphasize, and what ones to slight.

The inception of the plot dated back; had been months in the shaping and at first had worn a different face. To begin with, he uttered a false will for his patron, the man he to-day had killed. That was the germ idea. There was a true will accessible to him, in his keeping practically, but he had too much craft to destroy it. He had no fear of what might result from a comparison of signatures—he had worked too long to achieve a perfect imitation of Pettigrew's handwriting.

Likewise he had a better reason, which was this: By the real will nothing at all was given to most of Pettigrew's kinspeople; ten thousand cash was given to the two nephews and the niece; fifteen thousand went to him, Gaul, in consideration of long and faithful service, and all the residue, amounting roughly to three millions, went to create a fund in perpetuity for the education of coloured youth in the South. Now, then, the newer will which he had forged left to both nephews and to the niece five hundred thousand dollars apiece; it left to him, Gaul, an equal amount; it reduced no lesser bequest but substantially increased most of them, and it devised the remainder, as shrunken to a few hundreds of thousands, to the cause of the young Negroes.

So doing, Gaul was manufacturing sympathy and influence and friendly aid for himself; he was destroying the prospect of jealousy against him. Regardless of whatever private suspicions anyone among them might entertain, it would be to the interests of every individual beneficiary to contend for the probating of the bogus will and the throwing out of the prior-dated genuine will.

Human nature, selfishness, greed—why, they'd all fight as strong and influential allies on his side. So much for step number one.

Originally he had not contemplated doing away with his benefactor by violence. If the tempting thought came he put it from him as being unnecessary and over-risky. Pettigrew was well along in years, was sickly, and despite his small meagre body, showed apoplectic tendencies. He had weak

kidneys, too, or thought he had, which amounted practically to the same thing; was altogether a peevish failing dyspeptic bundle of walking symptoms, forever coddling himself and forever dosing himself. Surely Gaul should not have to wait long for his reward.

But perversely the hypochondriac hung on. He gave up active business; he gave himself over to playing seemingly conflicting parts—the part of a semi-invalid, and the part of a persistent gunner of wild fowl, which last was a sport of his youth, a thing dropped for business and now taken up again with almost a passionate avidity.

This naturally wore heavily on Gaul. It irked him, all this trapesing about to boggy, cheerless, isolated wild places; the lying out in all weathers; the uncongenial and uncomfortable surroundings; the banging away at shy but stupid web-footed birds; the enforced constant society of an irritable, peppery, intolerant master—for Pettigrew, who had few friends and no intimates, would have Gaul and none other for a companion on his expeditions.

Gaul's patience wore out. He thought of poison—some slowly consuming drug to be slipped into the medicines Pettigrew forever was taking. But he discarded that half-formed plan. He builded a better one, and he stayed his eager hand only until time and plan and conditions should match favourably with the purpose.

Largely through chance the opportunity came. Earlier in this present month of October Pettigrew took him to Reel-foot Lake for the beginning of the open season on migratory game. But the weather still was mild—too mild to stir the flocks out of the marshes of the Northern resting grounds.

At this juncture there happened along a fellow sportsman from somewhere in northern Alabama—a gentleman named Scopes—who told Mr. Pettigrew of a small unfrequented lake situate not very far above what he called the Big Bend of the Tennessee River, where for unfathomed reasons and despite climatic conditions there was a fairly dependable early flight of black duck and teal. Later would come swarms of the greenheads and the pintails, from which latter creatures this lake took its name. Within moderation he felt he could guarantee Mr. Pettigrew, going thither, would find satisfactory sport.

He went further. The town where he lived was not very many miles away from this lake. He paid a nominal sum yearly for the exclusive shooting privileges here. He offered to transfer his rights to Mr. Pettigrew and Mr. Gaul, to lend his equipment and to write a letter arranging with a widow who owned a farmhouse near by for their entertainment.

Mr. Pettigrew accepted with thanks. So the upshot was that he and Gaul packed up and travelled by train to Paducah and there boarded a stern-wheel packet, the *Lady Slidell*.

The *Lady Slidell* on the day before had delivered them at a small landing, and a native with a buckboard had carried them and their belongings to the homestead of the accommodating widow near a crossroads known as Starbuck's Store. In the afternoon they tramped through thick woods to the lake for a preliminary survey.

It revealed itself as a longish narrow body, encompassed with tall timber and around its edges with dense undergrowth in which there was but one tiny break and that where the footpath broke through. In times of high water it was joined, top and foot, to the river—not exactly a phenomenon in these parts, as they had learned. Very probably it once upon a prehistoric time had been a part of the bed of the river.

To Gaul's eyes it was a forbidding and altogether desolate spot, but Pettigrew liked the deserted looks of it. Its isolation should suit the wild fowl. Therefore it suited him.

It had at least one distinction not common to such waters but common enough to tidal estuaries. Offshore, above the solitary blind and therefore nearer the head, there stood a fish weir made, according to a familiar pattern, of tall poles set very closely together with one long slightly curved arm extending out across the current and the other bending in and forming an enclosed pouch, the whole being, roughly, in the shape of the Arabic numeral 9, with the joint not quite closed where the loop met the backbone.

Scopes had told them of the existence of this trapping device. A former owner of the place had built it, using the peeled trunks of straight willow saplings cut out of the adjacent swamps, his hope being that, in the time of the spring freshets, quantities of marketable large fish, schooling in from the river, would be pocketed here and held as prisoners, until

he seined them out. The venture, though, had never paid and had been abandoned, but the ragged ramparts still stood.

Against their outer flanks driftwood had been deposited by succeeding overflows, until the accumulated mass formed rude rafts and platforms. The serried tips, standing yards above the present stage of water, were favourite perching places for fish-eating birds. Here they would sit, like sparrows on fence pickets, to watch with cocked heads and then to dart down and catch the impounded small fry.

On this afternoon nearly every slender pile had its feathered tenant. There were chuckling kingfishers not yet driven down country by the withheld threat of winter; there were silent herons, both great and small; there were a few pouncing herring gulls, they being the advance guards for the hosts which soon would swarm in from the regions of the Great Lakes; there were two dingy water turkeys, rare visitors these, from the semitropical bayous far south of here; there was an even rarer casual out of the same quarter—a lone brown pelican strayed far inland from his accustomed habitat in the brackish bays of the bitter salt of the Gulf. There was a pair of fish hawks cruising overhead, and there was a solitary largish black forager flapping about awkwardly, a creature of a species which Gaul, idly eyeing the greedy assemblage, could not identify. But then he was no ornithologist.

Money was what he loved, not nature; and especially he did not love such phases of nature as now presented themselves to his view. But in one regard he was pleased. For he saw that his chance was at hand. This lonesome unvisited place was as though made to order for his well-nursed and long-delayed design.

And when this morning he had awakened to find everything wrapped in thick woolly fogginess, a vapoury blanket against sight and a muffler for sound, he rejoiced inwardly. They had been called at four-thirty o'clock; had breakfasted in a lamplit kitchen with their sleepy hostess serving them, and long before the retarded daylight came had trudged through the cloaking grayness across a field and had entered a narrow trail where wet cold bushes whipped at their legs. He bore his gun, also a heavy case of shells, a luncheon and a jug of water for drinking. Old Pettigrew went ahead of him,

carrying only a gun, and thereby the more surely sealed his own death warrant. His bottled hate made the laden and labouring Gaul fairly writhe as he followed close behind.

Coming down to the lake's margin they had to feel their way. It was by stumbling against it that Pettigrew, still in advance, found the skiff snubbed up to bank.

The older man climbed in and went astern. The younger cast off the tether, took the oars, and pulled out, aiming as best he could for a point diagonally opposite, where the well-sheltered blind should be. Largely by luck, they blundered headlong into it and disembarked and made ready against the further lifting of the fog and the coming of the game. Gaul set out the decoys.

The fog lifted, or at any rate it thinned. But it was after eight o'clock before in the murk about them they caught the *swish-swish*, like tough silk being torn crosswise, of swift wings. Directly overhead and, by reason of an optical illusion due to the atmospheric conditions, seeming to be twice their proper size, suddenly appeared a brace of ducks. They loomed an instant, swung, disappeared, then wheeled back into sight, poised and hovered, their pinions set and they ready to pitch in.

Pettigrew fired his right barrel, and the second bird crumpled and tumbled down with a splash perhaps ten yards in front of their ambush. He laid his empty gun aside, wriggled out from behind the blind, and splashed through the shallows.

"Well, anyhow, I got one," he said. "Why didn't you shoot?"

These were his last words. He stooped to pick up the dead bird and, with that, Gaul after just one lightning-swift fit of hesitation, one instantaneous flicker of his will, let him have it in back of the head and dropped him.

But strangely he lived. He must have a skull like iron. Face downward in the water, he wallowed and kicked spasmodically—like a speared frog, like a hooked fish. His shoulders heaved, he thrust up his mangled head and started a strangled gurgling cry. He began it, but he never finished it. Gaul broke through the blind, advanced, stood directly behind him and with the muzzle almost touching gave him the contents of the tight-choked left-hand barrel right between the shoulders. So of course after that he did not stir again.

Right there Gaul had displayed that first flash of quick-wittedness upon which, looking back on it, he might congratulate himself. How expedient he had been about reshaping the plan—how marvellously swift! For beforehand it had been his intention to claim he had killed by accident. The remorseful grief-stricken explanation of it already had been framed and mentally many times rehearsed—the fatal and ever-to-be regretted moment of carelessness, the stumbling of an unwary foot, the involuntary tightening of a numbed trigger finger on a touchy trigger. Every day nearly in the hunting season you read just that self-same story in the city papers. Some days you read it twice or oftener even.

But here was a difficulty: To account for one mortal wound in the dead body would be easy enough; to account for two such wounds and both of them inflicted from the rear, would be impossible. Instantly, though, or so now it in retrospect seemed to him, this most resourceful of assassins remoulded his scheme. He would weight the body with the heavy shell box and sink it in a deep part of the lake. In places the lake was very deep. This fact he knew by hearsay; he would prove it by making soundings. Then he would hurry back to the crossroads with a tale of a boat overturned, of the drowning of his unfortunate benefactor, of his own narrow escape. Why, indeed, this should make infinitely a better tale than the other.

He drew the skiff from its hiding in the slushy reed-grown herbage alongside the blind and shoved it out to where the flattened corpse was sprawled in shallows now vividly distempered. Taking care to get little or no blood on his garments, he lifted the body into the stern of the skiff. He had no trouble in huddling it on the floor boards below the level of the gunwale.

He put in also the shell case and the two guns, got in himself and took the oars, and pulled out through the cloaking fog which opaquely exaggerated everything—distances, the sizes of objects, the shapes of them. He meant to use the hitch rope of the skiff for fastening the shell case to Pettigrew's middle.

He pulled with steady strokes. He must be in the middle of the lake, or near it, when misgivings of a new and a terrible sort beset him. Suppose, dragging for the corpse, they grap-

pled it fast and hauled up the dumb yet eloquent evidence to hang him? Suppose it somehow was freed from its anchorage and rose? Suppose there was a way of draining this lake? One overlapping another, these dreadful contingencies raced across his mind, and the blood flowing to his heart seemed suddenly to stop short and curdle.

He threw up his head as though to clear his brain of fumes, and by that motion found the answer for his problems, for in that same instant he remembered having read somewhere, years and years before—perhaps it was in Dickens he read it—how formerly in England a suicide was buried where two highways met, with a stake driven through the heart.

Not a hundred yards from him and, by reason of a providential rift in the fog, more or less distinctly visible, a whole army of stakes showed themselves; a geometric pattern of them, protruding at gentle slants above the misted surface of the waters. They angled outward and toward him, forming a sort of irregular, slightly tilted palisade. A considerable number of them, especially those which formed the wing of the ruined weir, were shifted from true alignment with their fellows. Indeed a few had vanished altogether, leaving spaces like gaps in a row of snaggly teeth. If some were gone altogether it stood to reason that some of the others must be loosely rooted in the loamy bottom.

He pulled across there, frightening away a mixed flock of the birds which, as he had casually remarked yesterday, made this their hunting ground. Steering up alongside, he tried certain experiments. They were most gratifying experiments. The interwoven drift jam contained sizable saw logs, strayed cross ties, trunks of fallen trees. At this point and again at that it snugly was fixed. It teetered and quivered under pressure but would sustain him, would give him a reasonably secure footing. He tested it and knew it would.

Climbing out on it and balancing himself cautiously, he found that by exercising due care he could walk to and fro along it. He did this meanwhile, holding the painter of the burdened skiff securely, and at once dislodged from a crevice that special accessory to his new design for which he sought—a length of tree bough, water-soaked, solid enough to withstand hard strokes, heavy enough to serve him either as battering ram or hammer. And also by feeling, he discovered,

just where accident or age had made those intermittent spaces between the stakes, one stake which could be lifted out of its present position.

He did lift it out in a series of tugs, after having forcibly freed it from its socketing in the tenacious mud of the lake bed. Heaving it up, foot by foot, he saw that at its base it was sharpened to a point, as he had expected it would be. It had been displaced; it could readily be replaced and with blows upon its top, given a firmer position than before, and no human eye, however keen, be ever the wiser. Finally, for the simplification of his task there was this to be said—the body he meant to pin and shove under and press flat at the foot of his stake already was bored through and through.

It was here that for a brief ghastly spell a surge of nausea made him weak and dizzy. It passed through, immediately, and did not return. At the end of twenty minutes or so, the main job being completed, he reëntered the rowboat, and drawing away a few yards, contemplated his handiwork for any betraying flaws. There was no flaw. There was not the slightest difference by which to distinguish that one particular pile from the piles which neighboured it right and left. What hideous transfixed secret it held so securely submerged ten, twelve feet down beneath the placid coffee-coloured waters would still be his secret and his alone long after the tissues vanished and the skeleton parted and the bones sank into the soft ooze. Now let them drag and probe and scrape to their deluded hearts' content.

He rowed back to mid-lake, diagonally fronting the blind, and thereabouts, with an oar plunged straight downward so that his arm was wetted to the shoulder. He made soundings until the paddle blade no longer touched bottom. By taking bearings from the shore, now more plainly seen as a rising breeze carded the mist, he marked this spot. He meant to return to it. He did return after he had rowed into a small eddy above the blind and, standing knee-deep in water, had tilted the skiff on its side and painstakingly had washed it clean of all its fresh red stains.

Then, once more taking along his gun and Pettigrew's and the shells, he went back where he had sounded the depths and cast these articles overboard. But before that, standing in the blind, he had reloaded both guns, and for support of

his revised narrative had fired either set of barrels in rapid succession into the air.

He sent one oar adrift here. With the other he sculled his way nearer the bank and climbed overboard in water which was thigh-deep on him. He set the remaining oar free, capsized the skiff and gave it a strong push outward, then held his breath and stooped under, submerging himself entirely. His cap he allowed to lift off his head so that his scalp got thoroughly wet along with the rest of him. He waded ashore, being careful to emerge at a point where he stepped upon springy vegetation which recorded no foot traces, and ran, bareheaded, to give the alarm.

And now here he was, pouring the water out of his boots, and the thing was finished and it was all so fool-proof and so perfect!

Three days went by, then four, then five, and little happened except that Gaul sent messengers across country to the nearest railroad point with telegrams for divers of the dead man's kin and for the executors of the estate. Answers came back and were relayed to him, but none of the senders appeared. They would leave in Gaul's competent hands the melancholy efforts to reclaim the remains of deceased; the wires so stated. This suited Gaul.

He spent the daylight of these five days at Pintail. To the searchers he made it appear that merely a natural anxiety over their failure to recover his friend's body concerned him. He watched while they set off their futile, foolish blasts of dynamite, and inwardly laughed at them behind the mask of a face set to show a deep concern. The explosions created a heavy mortality among the fishes but that was all. A grapnel brought up one of the guns, but the other gun and the shell case remained unfound.

Also Gaul watched Uncle Joe Sam Flint. That venerable person took no active part in these vain proceedings but appeared content to moon about the shores of the lake, a solitary comic figure, always with his gun on his shoulder or in the crook of his elbow.

Once, on an afternoon toward the end of the week, Gaul suffered a passing qualm of apprehensiveness when he beheld the old man on the low bank immediately overlooking the

abandoned fish trap. At once though he was able to convince himself that he had no cause for trepidation because about all Flint did—and he did it for at least two hours—was to sit near the water's edge and smoke a pipe and contemplate his surroundings.

He did do just one thing besides these things, and that, to Gaul's way of thinking, was a characteristically stupid thing. He pulled up and fired toward the flocks hovering and darting among the pilings. He didn't hit anything, though. At the shot the frightened birds sped away, but presently returned to their foraging, and shortly after this their disturber betook himself away.

This triviality befell on the afternoon of the fifth day. On the morning of the sixth day, it being a Saturday, only four volunteer searchers appeared, and they knocked off at noon and went to their homes to eat their dinners. Gaul himself was preparing to go to his boarding-place at the widow's when Uncle Joe Sam came trudging up and hailed him.

"Mister," he said, in his friendly nasal drawl, "I wonder would you mind much agoin' out thar jest onc't more with me and show me perzactly whar it were you turned over and all. I'll pull the boat. You see, I've got a kind of a new idee about this here."

Gaul didn't mind. So they boarded the skiff, he sitting in the stern facing the oarsman, and they cruised over a given radius, and patiently Gaul, perhaps for the fiftieth time that week, repeated his mythical narrative.

"I reckon thet'll be enough," Flint said presently, "and much oblige' to you, mister." He gave a hard shove on the oars, then another and a third.

"Hold on," said Gaul, glancing backward over his shoulders. "You're getting off your course, aren't you? We're going away from the bank, not for it."

"I aim to head this here way," explained Flint. "That there old fish-cage jest yonder—that's what I'm headin' fur."

"But why?" Gaul strove to keep any suggestion of uneasiness out of his query.

"Oh, I got another little idee, tha's all. Look at them there near'most stobs stickin' up thar. Count 'em, please, startin' frum this end till you come to the 'leventh."

"I see it—what of it?" Gaul's voice was steady, careless,

but the beginnings of a terrible premonition smote on the killer's nerves.

"Well, I aim—ef you don't mind?—to land at that drift pile and let you out. And then, ez a special favour to me—you bein' younger'n I am and lots pearter—I'm agoin' to ast you, please, suh, to take holts of that there 'leventh stob and sort of rastle it loose fur me."

Gaul tensed himself for a spring. It was too late for that. Uncle Joe Sam had released his grips on the oars; they trailed in the oarlocks. He had his gun up ready to snap its butt to his shoulder; its muzzle, slowly lifting, almost brushed Gaul's breast.

"Mebbe"—the old man's tone was gentleness itself—"mebbe, mister, thar's some reason why you wouldn't keer to pull up that thar stob, heh? Well, then, which would you ruther do—have me hold this here fuzee on you and make you pull it up whether or no, or else whilst us two is settin' here with nobody else handy, would you ruther tell me whut's fastened down underneath at the foot of it?"

In the terror which had seized on him and was shaking him to pieces Gaul misinterpreted the motive behind this last. Could it mean this grim old man wanted pay for silence? It must mean that. It had to mean that. He caught at the hope it seemed to offer.

"I—I'll tell you," he cried, "tell you everything!" He did tell, in halting broken sentences, and by the time he had finished telling, the skiff before a puffy wind had drifted ashore at a point not very far from where the footpath broke through the frost-painted woods.

"This'll do fust rate fur a landin'," stated Flint. "Fur the time bein' I reckon we'll jest let that thar stob be. I reckon that'll suit you best. We'll get out here—you fust, please, and stand stiddy, till I kin crawl out." He made no threats, but his gun barrel was eloquent.

Had he tried, Gaul couldn't have run, though. His legs were like columns of soft gelatin under him, and in his ears, like a clashing gong he heard doom ringing, and he had a hideous choked feeling as though a noose was about his throat. In a way of speaking, a noose was.

Obedying a command—but it was in the form of a request most mildly and politely put—he set his hands behind his

back and crossed them, and Uncle Joe Sam lashed them together with the tie rope of the skiff. So doing, his captor apologized for the lack of proper bonds:

"I ordered me a set of handcuffs the same time I got me my badge and all. Cost eight dollars, too. The badge come and the diplomy, but they ain't never sent them handcuffs, yit. I'm sorry."

He scooped a palmful of lake water and let it trickle on the knot to shrink it tighter. He wrapped the free end of the rope about his left wrist, leaving perhaps three yards of tether between him and his prisoner. They turned inland.

"Them boys up at the store—they certainly have been thinkin' they had the laugh on me." The old man chuckled softly. "They'll be laughin' t'other sides of their mouths! . . . Not that way, please, mister," he said then. They had come to where the trail forked under the bluff. "We take the right-hand turn. You see," he added painstakingly, as though feeling an explanation were due, "you see, I wouldn't dast take you out past Starbuck's. Them boys mout not feel prone to string you up jest fur killin' yore friend the way you done, but I'm afeared they mout git the notion of takin' you away frum me and stringin' you up fur the way you treated him after he was dead. That would rile 'em up—and then them workin' so long and so hard on your say-so fur nuthin'.

"So we'll just dodge off here to the right and 'leven miles'll bring us to the county seat. We got a nice new county jail over thar. It's a right smart piece fur you to have to walk, but we'll jest jog along slow and take it easy. We'll have to, account of my old laigs."

But it was the old man and not the younger who shamled up the slope and on into the tall timber. Gaul's chin lolled on his breast, and at intervals hard shivers ran through him—through his legs, his body, his twisted pinioned arms. Not once again during the long journey to the new county jail did he speak.

Flint did, though, several times. For example, he presently said: "Mister, mebbe you'd like to know how 'twuz I come to ketch on? Well, I'll tell you. It wuzn't nothin' you said nor nothin' you done. You wuz purty smart, purty slick about it. I got to give you credit fur that. It was somethin' you didn't have no hand in, mister. It wuz a bird!

"Yes, suh, believe it or not, jest ez you're a mind to, that's whut it wuz—a bird. A crow, leastwise a kind of a crow. Not one of them reg'lar crows sich ez is so thick round these parts all the year round, but a bigger kind than whut they air and diffe'nt in his ways. F'r instance, now, he ain't so sharp after cawn and hen aigs ez they are. Seems like his taste runs more fur spiled vittles—carrion and stuff like that, same ez a buzzard's does. I reckon he ain't no keener eye than a buzzard's fur somethin' that's dead, but his smellin' powers is whar he seems to have the aidge on all of them. And smart—it's like ez ef he had second sight.

"He's an old residerter, same ez me. He's been hangin' 'round this lake fur years now—three or four anyways. He ain't got no mate, and I reckon he'd 'a' pulled out long before this, only he's got somethin' chronic the matter with one wing and can't fly so very good. It's a wonder to me how he come to git away in here in the fust place because he don't rightly belong to a country like this.

"A feller that was in here gunnin' two seasons ago, he told me about him. This here feller I'm speakin' of knowed the book names fur birds and all, even ef he hadn't steddied 'em clos't the way I have, and he says to me that this here crow rightly belonged fur away frum here—by the ocean side. Sea crow—that's whut he called him. He 'lowed he must 'a' strayed mighty fur frum headquarters. He marvelled about it, he did so. . . . Jest a minute, mister, I want to kind of ketch up with my breathin'. Got a kind of stitch in my laig, too."

There was a very short halt, then they went on, the leash drooping and swaying between them, and he droned on:

"Yes, suh, it's likely I wouldn't never 'spicioned nothin' out of the way ef it hadn't been fur that selfsame old crow. We've got to thank him. At the fust, I jest hung round because it seemed like to me, me havin' tuck up detecatin', that it wuz my place to be on hand whilst this here drowndin' business wuz goin' on. That's the main reason I stayed round. But nachelly I kept my eyes peeled, and day before yistiddy 'twas, I tuck note of him—the way he wuz actin' and all. I reckon ef I'd seen him onc't before that I'd seen him a thousand times, but now he wuz actin' funny—fur him.

"Here's whut he wuz doin'. He wuz settin' constant on one of them stobs on that old fish trap along with the kingfishers

and the creek cranes and all like that. I knowed whut they wuz thar fur—to ketch 'em some live feed—but whut wuz he thar fur? That's whut floored me. Because he ain't no great hand fur minnows and sunfish. Ef he's goin' to eat fish he'd ruther it'd be washed up on the bank, good and dead.

"But thar he wuz, and somehow I couldn't keep frum watchin' him and I thinks to myself: 'Whut're you up to, anyway?' And after a spell I noticed yit another funny thing about him. I notice that he's stickin' to jest one stob all the time.

"The other birds is flappin' hither and yon, and lightin' fust one place and then another, but he ain't—no, suh. And by grannies, the next I sees is that he's peckin' away, peckin' away with that old big black bill of his'n at the top of that stob like he's tryin' to get at somethin' down in it.

"All that night it stuck in my haid. I like to figger out whut wild things mean when they do a seemin'ly curious thing, because, shore ez shootin', they've always got a sensible meanin' to it. So yestiddy when I come back I looked fur him right off. And shore enough thar he sets on that same stob of his'n and he's peckin' away harder'n ever, seems like. So in the evenin' I tuck a turn round the end of the lake and crope up clos't and now, I could hear him fussin' to himself between licks.

"I comes out in the open whar he kin see me, and still he don't fly away—which ain't like him. So I sets and I steddies and I steddies, and after while I says to myself: 'That there stob he's foolin' with wuz pethy to begin with, it bein' a willow, and its grain runs straight up and down. Mo'over, it's been asettin' thar in the water a long time so probably it's got deep seams in it and water cracks. It don't stand to reason,' I says to myself, 'that that thar old scound'el's tuck a sudden fancy fur willow chips.'

"And right then and thar the beginnin's of a big notion come to me. So I ups and shoots one barrel above him in the air but not clos't enough to hit him. Away he goes lickety-split, but, by grannies, he don't go clean away, and that ain't like his nature, neither. He flops round and round and round and then purty soon back he comes, like he's cravin' and can't stay away, and down he drops clos'ter and clos'ter——"

It was as though by his homely words this old man created

a dreadful picture. It penetrated even through his sweated agony of despair to the numbed brain of the murderer so that he saw it and the damnation that was in it—this winged and ravenous undertaker, this black dreadful bird of nemesis, cawing, circling, hovering, descending to worry and tear with a strong greedy beak at the porous tip of a willow stake—a certain stake, always one certain stake.

“Clos’ter and clos’ter he comes and lights ag’in and starts peckin’ ag’in . . . And so that’s how-come me to toll you out thar on the lake with me this mawnin’ and try that little trick of mine on you, which it certainly worked out right, didn’t it, now? . . . Them blame’ boys back at Starbuck’s—— Say, mister, I kin shut my eyes and see the fool looks on their faces!”

THE LAW BEATERS

By RICHARD CONNELL

From *Collier's*

PASS over that bottle, Repton," the small man said. "Pass it over here before you drink it all."

The big man took the bottle from his lips. His great, flat, white face, like a pillow with eyes, twitched in a wry grimace.

"Vile stuff," he grunted. "Worse than the first bottle, even."

The small man took a long drink.

"Ugh!" he sputtered. "Molten pig iron! Still—it has a kick, and a kick is what we're after to-night, eh, Repton?"

"Yes, a kick is what we're after," agreed the big man and spat out a sharp oath.

"He charged me thirty bucks a bottle for this varnish," he growled. "The dirty, cheap thief. I hate a petty grafter."

"Who doesn't?" said the small man. "But why kick? He might have turned us down cold, you know. Looking at it one way, we're lucky to have even this rat poison."

"Oh, stop being philosophic, Shreve," the big man said, "and give me another drink."

"It's bucked me up some," said Shreve, handing back the bottle. "Here's a toast for you, Repton: 'To the law of the land!'"

Repton laughed a jarring laugh. "The law!" he cried. "That's rich, that is. The law! We've got a lot of jokes in this funny country of ours, Shreve, but the law is the biggest laugh of any of them, I know."

"Lawyer, aren't you?"

"Yes," Repton answered, "and a good one. Say, this stuff is beginning to warm me up."

"Good," said Shreve. "You were pretty low a while ago."

"I don't exactly feel like doing a song and dance now," Repton said, "but I do feel better." He suddenly chuckled

without mirth. "In my time, Shreve," he said, his voice growing thicker, "I've got away with a few things."

"I'll bet you have," said Shreve. "Some fast ones."

"Why not?" said Repton. "Everybody does. Why, in this enlightened country of ours the law goes around begging to be beaten."

"Yes, I know," said Shreve. "I know all about that. But sometimes a fellow's foot slips and they get him."

"His fault. Stupidity."

"Or just plain bad luck," said Shreve.

"In a very few cases, yes," Repton agreed. "But mostly the man who gets caught is just dumb. Anybody with even a slight trace of brains should be able to out-smart the police. Ever know any cops?"

"A few," said Shreve.

"Intellectual giants weren't they?"

"Not exactly."

"Of course not," said Repton. "If a man had brains enough to be a really good policeman, he'd be something else. Who but a thick turkey would flatten his feet on a beat for thirty a week—or maybe forty—if he lives that long? And American detectives! What a fine lot of stumblebums they are! Too old or fat to pound the pavements. They couldn't follow an elephant up a one-way alley."

"Well," remarked Shreve, "maybe you're right—but somehow the jails manage to keep pretty well filled."

"What with?" demanded Repton. "Green kids. Amateurs. Feeble old-timers. Where are the real, high-class professional crooks in America to-day? In cells? Not they. They're sitting around in white linen knickers on the porches of respectable country clubs, as free as air, planning new puzzles for the police to stub their two-by-four minds on."

Shreve laughed.

"You're a lawyer. You ought to know," he said. "Still and all, the criminal courts always have plenty of work to do."

"The courts!" said Repton. "Comic supplements, they are. The real big-timers who break the law aren't afraid of the courts. To them a trial is just a minor nuisance, like having a tooth filled. Take an instance: Suppose some burglar gets careless, and as he is leaving the scene of the crime bumps into a policeman and wakes him up and gets arrested. The news-

paper boys play it up as a marvellous piece of scientific crime detection. It's the old army game. A column when the cops happen to bag a man; half an inch when he gets away. Well, anyhow, luck is against our friend the burglar, and he's been caught with the diamonds in his vest pocket. Then what?"

"Another job for the lawyers!"

"Just that. The wheels of justice begin to grind. Believe me, Shreve, the rattle-trap windmill we call justice is a mighty creaky and old-fashioned machine, with a lot of loose bolts and nuts. It doesn't take a very big monkey wrench, properly thrown, to wreck it."

"I've seen it done," put in Shreve.

"Well," went on Repton, "they may finally bring our burglar to trial. Chances are the district attorney is blown right out of court, or his case is so riddled with holes and punctured with technicalities that it won't hold water when it's appealed. Well, at last, with the jolly taxpayer footing the bill, the trial is over and the jury gets the case. And what's a jury?"

"I can't tell you without using bad language," said Shreve.

"A jury," said Repton, "consists of a dozen bright citizens who don't read the newspapers or discuss what is going on, and who haven't any opinions, and whose opinions wouldn't be worth anything if they did have some. A lawyer with a tongue in his head can persuade 'em that cows fly. The unanimous-verdict idea is a great help too. Take any twelve men, and one of 'em is sure to be a Judas. I mean a fellow who will listen to reason and who will force a disagreement and a new trial. Especially in a small town."

"Sure," said Shreve. "You're right. You've got to know what side your toast is buttered on."

"I did," said Repton. "I was born with my eyes open. I played it right. Say—I'm getting a bit woozy from all this hooch."

"So am I," said Shreve. "But what does it matter?"

"It doesn't," said Repton. "Here—give me another shot."

As the big man drank Shreve paced up and down, his gait slightly unsteady.

"Yes," he broke out, "the law's a laugh. It's a humpty-dumpty thing, all right. I found that out."

"By the way, Shreve," Repton said, "what's your profession?"

"Live by my wits," answered Shreve.

"Meaning, I suppose, by other people's lack of them."

Shreve grinned.

"Put it that way if you like," he said. "After all, the world is divided into the hawks and sparrows—so you might as well be a hawk. Anyhow, I always have had plenty of gravy."

"From New York, aren't you?"

"Yes. The biggest hick town. You know all about me, I expect."

"Oh, I've heard a few things about you," said Repton. "You're not exactly a total stranger, you know. We were sort of expecting you. Of course, the accounts I have had of you may be a bit garbled. I'd like to get the straight facts. Might as well tell them to me. I'm not apt to broadcast them."

A half grin creased Shreve's narrow face.

"I guess I can trust you all right," he said. "Anyhow, booze always did make me trusting. That's my weakness."

Shreve poured a drink down his throat, gagged, and shivered.

"I'll tell you," he said. "Why not? I was with a mob—at first. After they chucked me out of college and my dad threw me out I had to do something. My specialty was steering college sports to a poker game. I had a liberal education in all the rackets—from gold brick to badger. Then I went into business on my own. I always like to work alone. I don't believe in splitting profits or secrets. I did a bit in the oilless oil stock line, until a federal dick almost landed me in the big stone house—but not quite." Shreve sniggered. "After that," he said, "I never got into trouble. I piled up some jack and some pull, and I snapped my fingers at the cops and the courts. I worked a lot of games—some old, some new. Of course I didn't go at things bull-headed. I worked my plans out to the smallest detail. That's the only way."

Repton nodded.

"Yes," he said, "that's the only way."

"That's what I did in the biggest job I ever pulled," Shreve said. "When I found I had to do it, I figured every angle. It wasn't in my line, but it had to be done."

"I know," said Repton. "When you get in a tight corner, you've got to get out—no matter how."

"Yes, it had to be done," repeated Shreve. "I was working an old dodge. Funny how simple-minded some successful merchants are, isn't it? I'd call up one of the biggest jewellery stores on Fifth Avenue, and putting on my society voice would say, 'This is Mrs. Roger Rogers' secretary speaking. Mrs. Rogers wants to select a diamond bracelet for her daughter's birthday, but she cannot come to your store, as she is ill in bed, so will you kindly send a selection of your best bracelets to her home on Park Avenue at three this afternoon?'"

"Well, I guess you've heard of Mrs. Rogers. She's all coin and blue blood—and, what's more, she pays her bills promptly so naturally the jeweller sent up a dozen of his most expensive bracelets by special messenger. Her house has a sort of vestibule, and when the messenger got there, who should meet him in the vestibule but yours truly, J. Burton Shreve, all dolled up in a cutaway coat, with a gardenia in his button-hole, a monocle in his eye, and no hat—as if I'd just stepped out the front door to meet him. I gave my best imitation of a snooty social secretary and said I'd sign for the package, as Mrs. Rogers was asleep. Of course he fell for it. He went away with the receipt, and as soon as he had turned the corner I went the other way with the package."

Shreve paused and frowned. "It was a lot my fault what happened," he said. "But I'm a sociable sort of fellow, and I liked Lannin. He moved into the quiet apartment hotel where I lived in West Forty-seventh Street—right next door to me. We got to chatting about dogs, and pretty soon we were pals. He was a stranger in town—from Los Angeles—and he liked a good time and had plenty of the stuff that good times are made of, so I showed him the town. I was taking a vacation at the time. We played the race tracks and cabarets and hide-aways together. Lannin was the best company in the world. We'd been hanging out together for a couple of months before Lannin got confidential, being well oiled at the moment, and sort of let it slip out that he had come East because he and the Coast cops had been playing tag and he was tired of being 'it.' He gave me a fairly strong hint that he was an expert rubber-check passer. Of course that

made the bond between us all the closer. He spoke my language, as the saying goes. I came across with a few interesting facts about myself and even went so far as to propose that he and I should do a job together. He said that would suit him fine. I was a fool, but this fifteen-minute-old rye loosens up a man's tongue."

"It does that," said Repton. "Give me another drag on that bottle."

"A couple of days later," said Shreve, "I ran into 'Count' Giraldi, who makes his sugar playing cards on the big liners. He'd been one of my mob years before. 'Say,' he said to me, 'have you turned foolish, or what ails you?' 'Come again,' I said. 'Who was the handsome stranger I saw you with in Tony's last night?' he said. 'A regular from the Coast,' I said. 'Lannin—Harry Lannin. Why?'"

"'Lannin?' said the Count. 'Lannin, my eye! Vogel's his name—Jason Vogel—and the last time I saw him he was making it nasty for a little friend of mine who tried to bring some diamonds into the country in her hot-water bag.' 'You mean he's a dick?' I said. 'A damn clever one,' said the Count. 'He's his own agency, see. Always works alone. Mostly for the big jewellers' protective association. If you're not sticking on the sunny side of the law, look out for him.' 'You must have him wrong,' I said, feeling pretty sick. 'But thanks for the tip.'

"I went straight back to my flat. I didn't want to believe that Lannin was a double-crosser, but I had to check up on him in a hurry. I sat down and did two hours' worth of thinking in ten minutes. Then I jumped into my studs and Tux and went and knocked on Lannin's door. I pretended to be as friendly as a wet setter. 'Listen, Harry,' I said, 'I'm taking you to a party to-night—something damp and lively. A couple of show girls I know are inviting the gang to their apartment, and we won't go home till morning, if then. So climb into your boiled shirt. I'll wait here while you dress. No great rush. You'll have plenty of time to bathe and shave.'

"I figured he'd do what he did do, which was to leave his clothes in the room with me while he was in the bathroom. I gave his coat a quick frisk. Sure enough, sewed inside one of the pockets was his private detective license, made out to Jason Vogel. Also I found a little black notebook in which he

had written down all the dope I had been simple enough to spill—and a few other facts I hadn't told him but he had found out by rummaging through my rooms while I was out. I'm businesslike, you see, and I'd kept a record of my operations, with names, dates, everything. Also he'd spotted a couple of diamond-and-ruby brooches I had salted away in a cache in my room, against a rainy day.

"He had me and had me right. It was more evidence than I cared to buck. I felt sure I could beat the charge, but it would cost me important money to do it."

"What did you do?" Repton asked.

"I put back the little black notebook," said Shreve. "turned on the radio, and sat there, thinking fast, till Vogel came out of his tub. Then I waited till he was all dressed for the party. Then I shot him square through the heart with a .32 automatic, with a silencer on it, that I'd kept in my room for seven years as a protection against burglars."

"Hmnn!" exclaimed Repton. "That was a crazy thing to do."

"Was it?" said Shreve. "Listen. Do you think I hadn't a plan all worked out? First I made sure he was dead. Then I got hold of the little black notebook and burned it to ashes in the fireplace and scattered the ashes out of the window. Then I unscrewed the silencer from the gun and slipped the silencer into my pocket. I put the gun in his right hand. Yes, I made sure he was right-handed. Then I went out, letting the door lock itself behind me. But before I went I opened his bathroom window about six inches."

"What for?"

"I'm coming to that. I told you I always worked things out in advance—and this was one job that had to be perfect. No mistakes. I walked out of the building. I was absolutely calm and clear headed. I went to a store on Broadway and bought something and then came back to my house and dropped in on the manager, whom I knew, a decent old Scotsman who thought I was a Wall Street man. I chatted with him a bit and then asked him how he'd like to play a little bridge in my place that evening. I knew he was a bug about the game. He jumped at the chance and said he'd get two other players.

"In that building lived two doctors, the Andersons, father

and son, well-known eye specialists, and Black, the manager, brought them along to my apartment, and we played bridge for half an hour or so. Then, while I was dummy, I stepped into my bathroom and took from my pocket the firecracker I had bought, lit its long fuse, and tossed it through Vogel's bathroom window, which was across a narrow areaway, not four feet from mine.

"I was back at the table, dealing the cards, when the cracker exploded. We all jumped when we heard it. 'Sounds like a shot next door,' one of the Andersons said. 'We'd better investigate,' Black said.

"So Black and the rest of us went to Vogel's apartment and pounded on the door, and getting no answer, Black opened it with his master key. There lay the detective, still warm, and the smell of powder from the cracker filled the room. Naturally, the doctors and Black bent over the dead man, so no attention was paid to what I did, which was to slip into the bathroom, grab up what was left of the cracker and stuff it into my pocket. When I came back the Andersons were solemnly pronouncing it a case of suicide. I had three very substantial citizens who could swear that when the shot was fired I was innocently playing bridge with them at a quarter of a cent a point."

"Neat!" ejaculated Repton. "Damn neat!"

"It wasn't bad for a beginner, I thought," said Shreve.

"Lord," said Repton. "It's 'way after midnight. I wish I could get to sleep. But I can't."

"Well, you've got a story," Shreve suggested. "You might as well come across with it. I did, you know."

Repton stared at the floor a while in brooding silence.

"Yes, I've got a story," he said. "Why shouldn't I tell it? It's better than sitting here—doing nothing."

"That's true," said Shreve. "Here's the bottle. Well?"

"I had to eliminate a man, too," Repton said. "I had no more compunction about doing it than I would have about crushing a tarantula. I hated him. I think he was born into the world for no other reason than to devil me. We started out by being partners, Andrew Erskine and I. Not that I ever really liked him. But he was as clever as sin. I trusted him about half an inch, but I woke up one day to find that even that was too much. We'd been promoting a little com-

pany together, with the general idea of skimming the cream and leaving the stockholders with nothing but some thin blue water.

"In the middle of it, I had to go to Albany on some other business, and when I got back home I found that Erskine had played me as filthy a trick as ever one white man played on another. He'd walked off with the spoils and left me holding the bag, and the worst part of it was that I couldn't do a thing about it. He was a smooth worker. He fixed it so he came out of it with cash and credit, and I was left with a black eye and empty pockets.

"I swore I'd get Erskine some day. I tried. But he kept getting richer and fatter and smugger, and every time I had a tilt with him he sneaked over a punch below the belt and left me flat on the mat. While we're being confidential, I might as well admit that I was afraid of Erskine, which, after all, is the chief reason why anybody hates anybody. Anyhow, I hated Andrew Erskine and felt I had good and sufficient reason for hating him. But everyone in Blansford knew we were bitter enemies. So it was a sure thing that if anything violent happened to Erskine, fingers would point straight at me. All I could do was to let my hate fester inside me.

"I did pretty well at that—in spite of Erskine. I made big money—and spent it fast. What I was after was one big killing that would put me on Easy Street the rest of my days. At last my big chance came. Or, rather, I made it come. No need to go into details. It was my own idea and a sound one. Not exactly ethical, maybe, by the strictest standards—but within the law. It was an elaborate water-power operation—and I worked on it a good six years. I put every dime I could lay my hand on into it.

"Then I found out something that almost cracked my spine. One man held the key to my door, and he could block me. Of course it was Andrew Erskine. He stood squarely in my path and there was no way round him. I could see only one solution. Erskine had to go. The question was: How? My enmity for him was well known. I could take no chances. I couldn't picture myself enjoying my money much if I had to spend most of it to keep out of jail. So I sat down and considered the question—and I found the answer."

"What?" questioned Shreve.

"What does a good executive do," Repton asked, "when a job must be done for which he hasn't the technical training? Why, he hires an expert, of course. That's what I did."

Shreve grinned.

"Sensible idea, but how did you find one?" he said.

"It took some hunting," Repton said. "I went to Chicago, where I didn't know a soul, and hung around the underworld dives and kept my eyes and ears open, and pretty soon in a speakeasy I spotted a man who was in the business. He was a soft-spoken, well-dressed chap with a pinched white face—a dope, I guess. Ike Mance was his name. I made a date to meet him that night. I rented a car and drove it myself out Oak Park way and picked Ike up at a street corner where I told him to wait.

"We drove into the country and parked in a lonely lane and had a talk. He was as businesslike as if he'd been selling me a ton of coal. My proposition didn't surprise him one bit. We dickered about the price, and he finally agreed to do it for twenty-five hundred down, in cash, and twenty-five hundred when the job was done. He agreed to start East on the midnight train. I went to French Lick Springs and played some golf with a party of Albany business men I knew, who were staying there. When Andrew Erskine died suddenly I intended to have plenty of unimpeachable witnesses who could swear that I was hundreds of miles away from the scene of the sad event.

"Four days after I parted from Mance I read in a New York newspaper a headline I'd been looking for—'DEATH OF UP-STATE CAPITALIST.' The police, the story said, were somewhat mystified by the death of Andrew Erskine. He had been found in his roadster, which had hit a tree and had been smashed up some but hardly enough to account for the injuries which had caused his death. They called it a queer accident, those brainy cops did, and let it go at that. Mance was a capable workman, all right. Two days later I went to Chicago to meet him and pay him off——"

"You took a chance there, Repton," Shreve said. "A lad like that wouldn't stick at blackmail. While he lived, he had a hold on you."

"Well, I had a hold on him, remember," said Repton. "Besides, Mance didn't live very long."

Shreve whistled.

"You are a thoroughgoing son of a gun," he said.

"It was part of my plan from the first," said Repton. "Mance might never have let a peep out of him about my hiring him and then again he might. You never can tell what a hop-head may do. Mance had to go out of the picture, so he went. I met him in a deserted spot outside of Chicago, took him for a ride in the country in my rented car, and left him in a ditch. I figured I had left no loose threads.

"I had a perfect alibi as far as Erskine was concerned, and there was no way of connecting me and Mance. Nobody had ever seen us together. His death wouldn't cause much of a flurry. What with all the gang wars out that way, the police expect a fellow like Ike Mance to be bumped off, and they don't greatly concern themselves when he is. The whole thing went through without any flaw or slip-up, so far as I could see. I drove the car back to the garage where I'd hired it—assumed name, of course—and took the express east for Blansford."

"I don't see any holes in it," said Shreve. "Not a hole. I thought I was pretty clever—but that beats me. Have another drink?"

"Yes, I need one," said Repton. "Pass back the bottle. Hey, be careful. Lord, you've done it now! Smashed to pieces!"

His voice suddenly became desperate. "What are we going to do now, Shreve?" he said. "What are we going to do now?"

"Aw, pull yourself together, Repton," said Shreve. "It won't be long. I just heard a cock crow. They come for us at daybreak."

"Will it hurt?" Repton asked hoarsely. "Do you think it will hurt much, Shreve?"

"Not much," said Shreve. "Just one shock and it's all over."

Down the stone corridor there was a muffled shuffling of feet.

"Listen," Repton cried, his voice raw with terror. "They're coming."

"Let them come," grated Shreve. "Let them come. I'm ready."

MR. SMITH

By LEE FOSTER HARTMAN

From *Liberty*, under title *Two Minutes to Live*

IT WAS the second night out from New York, and the *Tortola* was tossing in a heavy sea—which is to be expected when one is in the latitude of Diamond Shoals, steaming southward in a small West Indian liner. The smokeroom was deserted except for the steward, a big Barbadian Negro, who was polishing glasses in the bar and crooning softly to himself. He had brought me a whisky and soda, which stood in a tall glass at my elbow while I wrote. As the vessel rose and fell the ice in the glass lurched gently.

Presently the windward door was tugged open, a blast of air charged in, and the door slammed shut behind a passenger who looked about uncertainly, braced himself, and started forward. He caught at my table to steady himself as another roll tilted everything to starboard. The woodwork creaked and eased itself, and there came the rattle of the steering gear. He hadn't noticed my glass, which his elbow struck and sent crashing to the floor. He was distressed by the mishap and profusely apologetic.

"You must let me order you another," he insisted.

"Won't you have one yourself?" I invited.

He seemed to hesitate as he caught the aroma of the spilled Scotch, and then reluctantly yielded. "It's Scotch, isn't it?" he appealed to me before giving the order to the steward, who had come forward to clear away the glass fragments. "I'm not much of a whisky drinker," he confessed, as if the prospective drink was not exactly to his liking. "And yet on one occasion, several years ago, I had to drink a very great deal of it." He seemed unhappy over the recollection. "Force of circumstances, I might say, necessitated it," he explained. "The situation was peculiar."

He seemed an odd type, with every wish to be friendly but

inhibited by a natural timidity and a punctiliousness of manner which was almost formal. A small-town college professor was my first guess. He was a drab little man, quite inconspicuous except for a luxuriant grayish-brown beard. His eyes were a palish blue and almost childlike with their round, solemn glance. He looked as if the fifty-odd years of his life had been spent in studious pursuits quite remote from all rude and bracing contacts with the world. But, as I presently learned, he had adventured about the world a good deal in his own queer fashion. He was a bird collector for the Smithsonian Institute and now on his way to British Guiana.

"My name is Smith," he informed me, and added, with an effort to be jocular, "I dare say you've heard it before."

Just then the steward set a tray before us, and Mr. Smith's glance, directed toward the glasses, became apprehensive. He lifted his drink, tasted it without enthusiasm, and then set it down.

"I've never developed any liking for this sort of thing," he confided, still apologetic. "Not that I have any compunctions about it or that it disagrees with me. Once, as I said, I must have drunk half a bottle of Scotch whisky at a short sitting. But I don't recall experiencing any particular effect from it."

When I ventured to smile he leaned forward very earnestly. "No, I'm quite serious. If I may judge from that single experience I doubt if liquor in quantity would upset me."

"Will you smoke?"

He brightened visibly at the sight of the cigars I drew from my pocket. "Now you're tempting me. My one vice." As he lighted a match, his eye fell to my sheets of manuscript. "I'm afraid I'm interrupting you at your writing."

"It's nothing much. Just a story. I can get on with it tomorrow."

"You write—stories?" he asked. He seemed to evince an almost childish interest in the fact. "I've often wondered how you manage to think up stories—you people who make a business of writing."

"Well," I began lamely, "one gets hold of an idea or an odd situation and tries to make something out of it."

He nodded as if he understood, but I was confident that he didn't. I sensed in him that type of mind to which all things

literary remain an eternal baffling mystery. But the sight of literature in the making—even literature of a sort—intrigued him. As he puffed his cigar to a glow his gaze lingered curiously upon my manuscript.

"I've often thought some writer could make a good story out of my name—Smith. There are so many Smiths. You might have two different men named Smith, and then have one mistaken for the other."

In his naïve way he meant this to be helpful, and I could do no less than thank him for the banal suggestion. "Yes, there might be something in that," I agreed, but without enthusiasm.

For some moments we smoked in silence. The ship continued to roll, and the ice lurched softly in our glasses. He looked up at me once or twice as if about to say something but was too diffident.

"You know," he finally broke out, "that idea of the two Smiths occurred to me years ago when I was in one of these West Indian islands which we are headed toward now. That was the time, by the way, when I had to drink all that whisky."

"Did you fall in with another Smith?" I asked, for the whisky episode began to pique my interest. I couldn't imagine him a participant in any gay and riotous festivity. He wasn't the type to be drawn into a convivial party.

"No, indeed," he answered with decision. "The man I fell in with was named Donaldson. In the island of Santa Clara. It's still untouched by tourists. No towns, no roads to speak of. It's mostly mountainous—volcanic formation. With deep ravines—great clefts that seem to reach right up to the sky, filled with the most gorgeous tropical vegetation you ever saw. Stupendous hanging gardens. Ferns growing as large as trees. And, naturally, a paradise for birds.

"It was the birds that had come to interest this man Donaldson. Why he stayed marooned in that lonely place I could never understand. He lived by himself, in a shack over on the farther coast. Time must have hung heavy on his hands. Perhaps that's why he began to notice the birds and study their habits."

Mr. Smith paused and looked at me uncertainly. "Shall I go on and tell you about him?"

"By all means," I urged.

"Well, to start at the beginning. One day there came to the Smithsonian a letter of inquiry. It was from this man Donaldson, and he wanted to know this and that about certain birds he had been observing. The letter was a little shaky as to spelling, but the questions were pertinent. It looked as if the fellow had got hold of at least two species we didn't know anything about. So I answered the letter, told him what he wanted to know, and after a while he wrote again. A sort of correspondence developed between us. He joked me about my name being Smith; asked if I resembled any of the other Smiths. So I enclosed a snapshot of myself and said I'd be pleased to have a picture of him.

"After a long while he replied. He said in his queer, jocular way that the only photograph of himself was kept where he couldn't lay hands on it or he would have destroyed it long ago, but if I would shave off my beard I might easily pass for him in the dark. Then he asked if by any chance I was a Smith from Ripton Valley in Vermont, which amazed me completely, for my family happened to come from that district. I could only figure it out that he had lived there once himself, and having known a lot of the Smiths in Ripton Valley he had spotted a family likeness in that picture of me. He was a sharp one. His observations of birds had proved that.

"Well, naturally, I grew interested in the fellow, and I decided to look him up if my duties ever took me down to that part of the Caribbean. And a couple of years later the chance came. The only port in Santa Clara was a straggling Negro village, set among the usual coconut palms, in a little bay on the west coast. But there was a resident commissioner, to whom I presented my credentials, and he offered very kindly to put me up. There was really no other place to stay. Then I asked about Donaldson."

"'Oh, that chap!' said the commissioner. He was a very correct British official, and his eyebrows went up at my question. 'I believe he keeps pretty much to himself on the other side of the island. You know him?' And then I explained about our ornithological correspondence. 'Fancy!' was his sole comment. I began to think he had no great opinion of Donaldson but was politely keeping it to himself. 'I'll give you a note to the keeper of the lighthouse at Cap

Indienne. He'll show you where Donaldson lives near by. And have him show you through the Cap Indienne light. It's the most powerful light for navigation in these waters south of Saint Lucia.'"

Mr. Smith broke off to relight his cigar, and in the pause I remarked that I had seen mention of the Cap Indienne light in a guidebook I had been reading. He nodded, and his eyes fell to his glass. He took another sip, much as if it were something unpleasant prescribed by the doctor.

"Does this interest you?" he asked almost timidly.

"Very much indeed," I assured him. I was wondering where the whisky episode would come in.

"It isn't a story exactly—not what a writer like you would consider a story. But maybe you could get something out of it." He made another effort to swallow some of the liquid in his glass. "Well, a week or so later I worked over to the other side of the island and met Donaldson. I had written him from Washington about my trip, but he didn't know just when I would turn up. So I gave him quite a start. He wasn't used to visitors, and I was a complete stranger to him. Even my hunting coat and collector's gun didn't identify me for a moment. He had come to the door of his shack for some purpose, not hearing my footsteps, and there we were suddenly face to face.

"He fairly jumped at the sight of me, as if I had given him the fright of his life. Suddenly he remembered. 'You're Smith!' he exclaimed. We shook hands. 'Come inside,' he said, visibly relieved. He eyed the bulging pockets of my hunting coat. 'What have you got there?' he demanded, almost suspiciously. At the sight of my day's kill the uneasy lines in his face softened. He began to talk about birds.

"I stayed with him for a couple of weeks. He wouldn't hear of my going back to the other side of the island. And his bungalow was fairly comfortable if it was a makeshift construction on the edge of a tropic wilderness. He had lived there for several years in a queer, unbroken solitude."

Mr. Smith paused and shook his head thoughtfully. The ship continued to pitch and roll. Fierce blasts of wind buffeted the windows of the smokeroom. At intervals came the lash of flying spray.

"Even after two weeks of him he was still almost a stranger to me. My wife says I haven't the knack of getting acquainted with people. And there was something about Donaldson—I don't know. I guess we weren't exactly the same sort. But he knew every inch of that wilderness and helped me a lot in getting the particular birds I was after. He seldom spoke about himself. He was what you'd call tight-lipped. But I learned that he was a Canadian, grew up on a wheat farm in Alberta. Wilcox, the keeper of the lighthouse, who was Donaldson's only neighbour, didn't believe it. 'Anyone can see that he's an American, like yourself.'—'But,' I argued, 'how can he be? His parents came over from Liverpool.' The lighthouse keeper only looked at me curiously. 'Come, now, aren't you a relative of his?' Which of course was absurd."

"The name Donaldson sounds Scotch," I interrupted. "What was he like?"

The question seemed to stump Mr. Smith's powers of description. He struggled for a moment and then shook his head helplessly. "My wife says I never observe anything but birds. No notion at all about people's looks or clothes. I don't know. Donaldson was just an ordinary person. Rather short. About my size. You could see he wasn't educated in the accepted sense. But he had a shifty, quick mind. He was what you'd call smart—a man you wouldn't exactly want to trust. What his business had been——" Mr. Smith let it go with a despairing shrug. "Living so long in that tropic wilderness had obliterated all telltale signs."

"What I did come to notice about him was a sort of uneasiness, as if he were always on guard against something. He seemed afraid of people, didn't want them to come near him. The result probably of living so long by himself. Once a month he went over to the other side of the island for his supplies. He said he was always glad to get back."

"Having me on his hands for a couple of weeks necessitated an extra trip. It happened to be a day when a vessel was in port and a handful of tourists on shore. He had said he would not be back until after dark, but he must have made surprisingly good time, for when I returned to the cabin after a day's collecting by myself he had already been there and departed again. He had dumped down the supplies and

scribbled me a note to say that some unexpected business had called him away. He might be gone several days. I was to make myself at home in the meantime.

"Toward sunset on the following day I was dressing some birds and working fast while the daylight lasted. But the sun dropped before I realized it, and the tropic darkness was around me like a shot. I lit a lamp—there was the merest drop of oil left in it—but instead of refilling it at once I sat down again to my work. I grew completely absorbed in it until suddenly I became aware of a strange man at the open doorway, looking in upon me.

"It gave me a queer start, for I had the feeling that he had been standing there watching me for some time. I couldn't make him out clearly, but I could feel—yes, actually feel—his eyes boring into me.

"‘You want Mr. Donaldson?’ I asked. For a moment he didn't answer but just continued to eye me. ‘Donaldson,’ he repeated the name aloud to himself, then gave a sniggering laugh.

"I got up from the table to get oil for the lamp. With my back turned I was fumbling among packages on a shelf when suddenly he shouted:

“‘*Smith!*’

"I fairly jumped at the sound of my name—it was like a pistol shot—and of course I whirled about in surprise. The fellow in the doorway seemed delighted with the shock he had given me. He laughed harshly, triumphantly, and advanced into the room. "‘You know me?’ I asked in bewilderment. ‘Beard and all,’ he retorted. I turned again to the shelf, but he stopped me sharply. ‘What are you after?’—‘Oil for the lamp,’ I explained.—‘No, you don't. Sit down!’ he commanded, and he actually levelled a revolver at me."

Mr. Smith paused for breath and regarded me a little anxiously, as if fearing to find me incredulous. But my complete attention seemed to reassure him. He resumed:

"Well, naturally, I sat down. Very limply, as if my legs had suddenly given way. I admit I was scared. The fellow might be crazy. And that revolver glinting in his hands terrified me. I had never looked into the muzzle of any firearm from exactly that position. Meanwhile the lamp was flickering its last and the darkness deepening around us. It was

creeping out past the Cap Indienne light to the open sea, where the day still lingered.

"I didn't relish sitting in the dark with a madman. The thought of that lamp going out seemed almost as terrible as the muzzle of his revolver suddenly spouting flame. I remonstrated: the lamp must be refilled. 'None of your slippery tricks!' he retorted curtly. He sat down at the other side of the table, with his right hand resting alert upon the edge. It held the revolver, which still covered me.

"The lamp guttered its last, with that hostile, mysterious presence growing even more menacing as it merged with the dark. And suddenly, like a flash of lightning, the whole room was illumined. It was the first flare of the Cap Indienne light, breaking out its powerful ray and sweeping the empty sea for I don't know how many miles. Donaldson's cabin, I should have told you, had a broad window from which you could look down upon a considerable stretch of the coast. The blunt promontory known as Cap Indienne directly fronted it. In that vast solitude the lighthouse was like a gaunt, lonely obelisk, with a single fiery eye that revolved endlessly.

"For an instant the room was like day, and then we were plunged again into complete darkness. For twelve long seconds. During which the ray transcribed its vast circumference, and then, with startling suddenness, everything in the cabin once more leaped out into blinding reality. I can shut my eyes now and still see it all: the heavy round table at which we sat, the ancient chairs, the littered shelves on the opposite wall where were ranged some birds Donaldson had stuffed, looking down at us with beadlike, unblinking eyes. Everything became visible for an instant and then vanished. Twelve seconds of utter blackness. Each time it seemed like an eternity before the flash came again."

Mr. Smith broke off and sighed over the recollection. He even drew out a handkerchief and passed it over his face.

"I never could tell you all the weird, insane talk that followed in that intermittent darkness. It seems now like nothing but a nightmare, quite incredible. I sat there in a cold chill, helpless to move, if I could have moved, while the light came and went, and that revolver continued to point at me. And with the growing certainty that he intended presently to empty its contents into my body. He had waited

years for this chance, I gathered. He had been confined all that time in prison, for which apparently I was to blame, and there were others—a gang of ruffians, it seemed—who equally thirsted for my extinction. At first I thought that the fellow was drunk or out of his head. My own head was in too much of a whirl to get it all clearly. But after a while I concluded that there was really something in it. I must have a sort of double; there was another Smith, and down there in Santa Clara—of all places!—I had been mistaken for him.

“But my visitor was in no hurry. Like a cat with a mouse in its clutches, he proposed to savour leisurely the delight of making an end of me. He had looked forward too long to this moment—to have it all over with one quick bang of that pistol. He wanted to gloat in his horrible way over what was so obviously coming to me. And he had, I suppose, what you might call a sense of the dramatic. For when he caught sight of a bottle of Scotch whisky on the shelf beneath the stuffed birds he brought it to the table with a couple of glasses. ‘We’ll have a drink,’ he announced in the darkness. ‘It will be like old times.’ And he laughed hideously.

“Just then the flash came again, and I got a vivid sight of him, his mouth wide open, like a black hole in his shrunken, pasty-white face. The prison pallor was still on him. What he looked like, I really don’t know. In those flashing glimpses of him, when everything suddenly leaped out of the dark, his face seemed like a hideous mask, contorted and triumphant. ‘After you,’ he said grimly, and pushed the bottle across the table. I must have come out of my paralyzed state enough to pour myself a drink. When the room blazed with light I saw him with uplifted glass. ‘Here’s to your dead carcass, and may you roast in hell!’ he announced. Mechanically I raised my glass and tasted it. I suppose my dislike for Scotch whisky dates from that moment.”

Mr. Smith took up his glass, sipped it, and smiled dismally. “It brings back everything.”

“Don’t drink it,” I interposed. “Let me get you something else.” But he shook his head. He was silent for some moments, thoughtfully turning the glass in his fingers and watching the ice dissolving in it. Suddenly he looked up.

“What would you have done in a fix like that?” And without waiting for a reply, he went on: “It seems simple enough

now. I should have told the fellow at once that he had got hold of the wrong Smith. Nothing easier. But at the time it wasn't. For one thing, my tongue seemed glued to the roof of my mouth. It was like a jelly. Frantic thoughts whirling in my brain until it almost hummed. If only Donaldson would come back. If only Wilcox would stroll over from the light-house. Which, of course, he was not permitted to do at night. I even prayed for some miracle to intervene and save me. And in the meantime I sat in that hot, dreadful darkness, braced against that recurrent, measured moment when, like a lash across the eyes, would come that swift, splintering light. And the horror of it all would once more stand revealed like noonday—that brutal, villainous face, whisky glass in one hand, revolver in the other.

"The bottle went again across the table. I managed to find my voice at last. I didn't like the stuff, I protested; I didn't want another drink. Only to be overwhelmed with curses. His language in moments of special irritation like this was really quite dreadful. He swore I'd drink with him or he would blow the—I believe he said the everlasting daylight—out of me, then and there. When the flash came again I saw that he had lifted the revolver. He informed me that I had always been a timorous little white-livered skunk. Felt myself too good to associate with common people. If he had only realized it ten years ago, fool that he had been to fall for me. However, the reckoning was at hand, and to-night all old scores would be settled.

"And so I drank, choked the raw stuff down somehow. Each time it seemed more nauseous than the last. He gulped his down with positive relish, and grew boisterous as it mounted to his head. 'We'll drink to all the old gang!' he suddenly exclaimed. 'Fill your glass!'

"The light came and went as I poured again. The stuffed birds, stiff and motionless on the shelf, made a grotesque audience, looking down upon us with unseeing, buttonlike eyes. 'Here's to Jake Sprague!' he toasted. 'Lift your dirty glass!' He waited for the flash to come again to see if I had obeyed. And then, in the darkness, his voice suddenly dropped to a cold, menacing tone. 'Do you know what happened to Jake, you stuck-up, white-livered skunk? He did three years before they had to put him in the hospital ward. His lungs

were gone. They let me see him once before he died. Last thing he says to me, he says, "Spike, I'm a goner. Listen, Spike, when you get out of here you've got to get Smith if you swing for it. And when you plunk the little bastard plunk him once for me!" . . . Here's to good old Jake!"

Mr. Smith paused to mop his forehead, upon which beads of perspiration had gathered. This memory of his youth was still very real to him. "Can you imagine me in a predicament like that? Can you imagine?"

Frankly, I couldn't. It seemed too unutterably absurd. With that beard which gave him an almost academic air, his timid, inquiring eyes, and his stiffish, formal speech. He seemed a harmless creature in a world of hardier spirits.

"Do I look like a crook? Do I?" he appealed to me again.

"You certainly don't," I assured him.

"All this happened nearly twenty years ago. Perhaps I looked different then," he went on in his childlike simplicity. "I may even have resembled that other Smith this fellow was after. I've often wondered just what points we may have had in common." He revolved this enigma in his mind for a few moments.

"Of course your guilty start when he called you 'Smith' seemed to give you away," I pointed out.

"Perhaps you are right," he said absently. "But it wasn't a guilty start; I simply jumped at the unexpected shout of my name." He pondered this for a while. "Yes, it was misleading and most unfortunate." He proceeded with his story.

"After the toast to the deceased Jake Sprague, it was the turn of a certain Dickey White. The bottle again went across the table, and I had to listen to another maudlin eulogy, with scorching comment upon myself. If I had any last glimmering of doubt as to my visitor's cold-blooded intentions, it vanished completely. I wouldn't have believed that any man on earth could focus upon himself such collective, fiendish hate as this mysterious Smith I had been taken for. It almost turned me sick. And yet here's a curious thing. Like a man put under sentence of death, once the first shock and realization of it were over, I began to get used to it. As those dreadful toasts to my former pals proceeded, my thoughts steadied.

"I started at last to argue with him. I wasn't the man he

was after. But I had come to my senses too late, for his were gone—thanks to all those drinks of whisky. He was past the stage where I could reason with him. He only grew violent and began again to curse. ‘What in the world would I be doing here?’ I demanded. ‘Hiding, of course!’ he retorted. ‘But I’m a bird collector for the government.’ That sounded so silly to him that he only laughed. I persisted, until he raised his gun. ‘Shut up!’ he commanded, ‘or I’ll bump you off now.’ And I shut up. My life hung by a thread, but it was folly to cut that thread.

“When he passed the bottle again I didn’t dare refuse. I poured myself another scant helping. My mind was struggling desperately for a way out of that awful fix. I’m not what you’d call a man of action, exactly. And mentally I was all tangled up. This was too much like something one reads about in a book. Something that doesn’t happen—least of all to one’s self. And yet here it was actually happening to me. The reality and yet unreality of it somehow wouldn’t reconcile themselves in my mind.

“But the repeated sight of the muzzle of that revolver every time there came that blinding flare of light was enough to drive me to any desperate step. I even considered just bolting in the dark, but the round table was of enormous size, and it stood between me and the door. For all his maudlin talk, his right hand remained like a thing apart from himself, alert and ready. Each time the white flash swept the room I saw the revolver covering me. He was evidently an old hand at tricks of that sort. A sudden dash on my part would only be inviting destruction. If I could have snatched the ugly thing out of his grasp—but the mere breadth of the table barred so desperate a chance. Besides, I knew that in a hand-to-hand struggle I should be no match for him.

“If only I could lay hands on a weapon of some sort. My fingers fairly itched. Again came that blinding moment of unnatural daylight, and I looked desperately about. My collector’s gun hung upon the opposite wall. There was nothing within reach, nothing I could snatch up that might offer even a chance for unequal battle.

“He passed the bottle again with a harsh command to ‘Drink up!’ My fingers closed mechanically upon it, lifted it. And suddenly a thrill went over me. *The bottle!* As I shakily

poured my drink in the dark I felt its smooth flanks, appraised its weight. The flash came just then, and I saw its thick, heavy bottom. 'Come across with that bottle!' he commanded impatiently.

"But I knew it would come back to me again, and now I had a desperate hope, a half-formed plan. My heart began to crowd up into my throat and beat thickly as I mentally rehearsed the execution of that foolhardy design. The bottle! It was my only recourse, my only chance, against his gun.

"It sounds absurd now, doesn't it? One chance—would you say—in a hundred? For I couldn't reach across to brain him with it; the table was too wide. I would have to hurl it at his head—and in the dark—trusting that it would find its mark.

"But when it came to that ticklish moment of lifting it and aiming it at his head for that desperate fling on which everything hung I didn't want liquor spilling out of it. We would have to drink it dry. So I poured myself a stiffer drink. When the room blazed again he saw what I had done and laughed. He even applauded my increasing thirst.

"I gagged over the fiery stuff, but I got it down. It never occurred to me that it might make me intoxicated. And I give you my word, it didn't have the slightest effect. Once I had managed to swallow it, it might have been so much water. Drink after drink—ugh! But I contrived to reverse the order of pouring. 'After you!' I now said, and so after each replenishment of our glasses the bottle remained on my side of the table.

"At length it was empty. The last of the whisky was in our glasses. I could feel my heart thumping like a trip hammer, only no trip hammer ever went at such a pace. It was now literally do or die. He tossed off what remained of his drink and threw the glass to the floor. 'Time's up!' he announced thickly. The returning flare lit up his determined, evil face. He had raised the revolver and was leaning slightly forward. He meant business. 'I'll give you ten more flashes of that light. When the tenth comes, I shoot. . . . That's one!'

"The darkness was upon us again. The light was gone, in its vast circular sweep over the empty sea. Ten flashes—one hundred and twenty seconds, I calculated. I had two minutes to live. You may be surprised that I could do a simple bit of

multiplication and division at a moment like that. But I did it, and rather deliberately, too. For a sort of cold apathy had come over me. Yes, I deliberated. For while only two minutes stood between me and death, nevertheless I was sure of those two minutes. Within that narrow margin of time I had, so to speak, all the time in the world. To fling that bottle at his head was the work of an instant.

"So I deliberated. Should I hurl it at once or wait? While I was pondering the question, the room blazed again. 'That's two!' he said. He had straightened up now, prepared for the business in hand. His fingers had tightened upon the revolver.

"I rehearsed in my mind what I was about to do. I tried to visualize the bottle clutched in my hand. I tried to imagine its heft when lifted above and behind my head—just how it would feel—and then the swift fling with all my strength. I was strangely composed, although my heart was racing with tremendous heat. I could feel the pounding even in my ears. For example, I reflected that there was a nicety about that throw, quite as important as correctness of aim. The bottle must not turn too fast in midair. The success of my desperate manœuvre might depend upon the bottle striking his skull with its heavy end. The most I could hope for was to knock him cold, as they say, while I made a dash from the cabin toward Cap Indienne.

"'Three!' he counted, as the room suddenly leaped out into reality and vanished again. 'Shall I risk it now?' I asked myself, and hesitated. Meanwhile, with every instant, the ray was sweeping out around its vast circular track. No, I wasn't yet set. I wanted the full twelve-second interval of darkness, not a fraction of it. And how could I be sure of my aim in the dark? Under that persistent flashing one's eyes didn't grow accustomed to it. Each recurrent flare only intensified the utter blackness that swept back into the room.

"So I waited. My hand crept out and felt the bottle, drew it slightly nearer. And then I dropped back to my former position before the coming of the next flash. 'Four!' went the count. Again I reached out in the dark and grasped the bottle by the neck, lifted it cautiously, adjudged its weight. More seconds went by. 'Five!'

"Half my time was gone. Should I wait, I debated, until the count reached eight, or even nine? No, that would be

too much like leaving things to the last moment—a practice I've always disapproved of. But I decided to let the count of six pass while I tried the experiment of shutting my eyes against the glare that repeatedly blinded them.

"Six!" I heard him announce. I opened my eyes after the flash had gone. Now I could dimly make him out in the darkness. The time was shortening, but I decided to give my eyes still one more respite. I waited, and shut them again during the count of seven!

"And now for it. I reached out for the bottle, gripped it firmly but not too tightly, and raised it back behind my head. I was really quite deliberate about all this. I had twelve seconds for the work of an instant. I balanced the bottle in preparation for the shot, swung it tentatively back and forth past my ear, much like a golfer making preliminary motions over his ball. I could dimly discern his head like a round blotch in the darkness. I took aim, a deep breath, and let fly.

"There was an awful crash, a great splintering of glass, and my visitor went bodily backward, chair and all, to the floor. And at the same instant came a flash and terrific report, for his revolver had gone off in his spasmodic clutch as he tumbled over. It fell from his hand, and in my dash for the door my foot struck it. I groped about and luckily found it. And once I felt the warm, sweaty butt in my grasp, my panic subsided. I turned and waited for the next flare of light. It came, revealing him limp and unconscious—a most unpleasant sight. I could see, at one appalling glance, there was nothing to run away from now. The bottle had worked incredible havoc. His skull was laid open above the left eye and an ominous trickle of blood was spreading out over the floor. When I dashed off at top speed toward the lighthouse it was not for refuge but to seek help."

Mr. Smith sighed heavily and leaned back in his chair as if exhausted. He mopped his face with his handkerchief while his timid blue eyes regarded me with anxious concern. "You understand, don't you? It was not at all what I had planned. But how could I have known? I had no idea how dangerous it might be to throw a bottle at a person's head.

"By way of sequel I stood trial for manslaughter in the Barbados court," he added, with lowered eyes and a little shame-faced. "But that experience was not as bad as it may

sound. The British commissioner at Santa Clara who had entertained me was most sympathetic. I had no trouble at all in convincing him that I had not been the aggressor. He said he was sure I wouldn't kill a man in cold blood. Thanks to him, the whole affair in the end was little more than a court formality, for in the meantime it had been ascertained that the fellow was actually an ex-convict from the States. How he got me mixed up with the other Smith and then tracked me all the way to Santa Clara I never could figure out. Donaldson, who turned up the day after the unhappy affair, couldn't make head or tail of it."

Mr. Smith was silent for a few moments, his forehead wrinkled with a perplexed frown. "You'd have to think up some explanation of that—wouldn't you?—if you made all this into a story."

I nodded assent.

"And that other Smith—you'd have to get him into the story somewhere?"

"We might pretend that Donaldson was the other Smith," I suggested.

He puzzled over this for a long moment, and suddenly his face lighted.

"Now that's an idea!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. He pondered further over my proposed emendation of his tale, shaking his head with a sort of envy mingled with admiration as its possibilities grew clear to him. "Do you know, I would never have thought of that. Well, after all, you writers . . ." His voice trailed off absently. Presently he sighed, in a kind of resignation, and pushed aside his half-emptied glass:

"I guess my line is just birds."

THE ACTOR

By NUNNALLY JOHNSON

From *Saturday Evening Post*

BEFORE sitting down Peacock gave the other diners a dignified inspection. He always did in a restaurant. For, standing there with a thin Russian cigarette held nonchalantly between a couple of neat fingers, it was a fine, handsome figure he cut, and he was far from being a man to deprive the public of a pleasant spectacle. That was Peacock—always generous, always liberal with views of himself.

Then, having noted all, and in perfectly fair return permitted himself to be noted, he sat down, picked up the menu, studied it portentously and said, "Ah!"

"The usual crowd, I suppose," I commented.

"Barthelmess is here. Charming fellow, Dickie; one of my dearest friends. Know him?"

"I'm sorry, I don't."

"Splendid fellow, and an artist of the first rank. Too bad you don't know him."

"It is," I agreed.

We'd chosen to have dinner at the Madrid, because that was the kind of place Peacock liked. Many other ladies and gentlemen celebrated in the arts allied to Broadway dined there, and consequently it had likewise a large patronage of sightseers who had heard so and who came to whisper excitedly as Johann J. Szilch was mistaken for Vincent Lopez, and Reba K. Berkman was positively identified by two lady voyageurs from Buffalo as Peggy Wood. There was a great deal of surreptitious pointing during the dinner hour, and this was frequently a source of deep if ephemeral pleasure on the part of such occasionals as myself, who, if I may be permitted to mention the fact, once sat in a rosy daze as two lovely young visitors gave me their rapt attention for more than an

hour, under the impression, I am sure, that they had spotted Larry Semon, the film comedian.

"Harpo Marx is over there, too," Peacock said.

"Yes?"

"Marvellous fellow, Harpo, and a first-rate artist. A man I am proud to call friend."

Peacock himself had no need to seek his pleasure in ignorant sightseers' errors. The attention he got, which was a great deal, was rightly his own. It would not be accurate to say he was a nationally known celebrity or that his features were familiar to every man, woman, and child in the land; but for ten years he'd been distinguished enough to warrant the use of his name prominently displayed in the billing of his various shows, and these shows had been generally successful. It was a real name, and it flew on billboards and in newspapers past Broadway and New York to nearly ever home blessed with even a no more than fairly observant home body. I'd known it for years before I met him, and I'm no devourer of theatrical chit-chat and small talk.

When he came into the Madrid, or into any other restaurant or hotel dining room in New York, and eager eyes followed him through the lobby and buzzing whispers marked his presence at the next table, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he was not being mistaken for Vincent Lopez or Larry Semon; he was being recognized as Reginald Peacock.

Nor, I may say at this point, did he ever allow this little tribute of recognition to pass unrewarded. What his table behaviour may have been in the privacy of his own dining room, away from the gaze of the public, I cannot say; but in the open it was clearly of the Robert B. Mantell school. During the ordering of the meal his dramatic instincts were fairly under control; but once this was past and the meal reached the conversational stage, his eloquence was visible and stirring. He gave, as it were, his all; and observers well out of earshot were easily able to follow, through his vivid pantomime, the trend of his discourse.

He never, so far as I can remember, actually stood up and wept with the heroine of his story; but short of that, I should say she ran up and down the human gamut of emotions as neatly as I have ever seen the trick done sitting down.

There is very little privacy in this form of conversation; but

privacy was not, after all, what Peacock sought. He was making what is known as an impression.

So, knowing this, I was prepared in theory, anyway, for what occurred this evening. We had given our order, and I was thoughtfully informing him that it seemed clear that the lady and gentleman at the next table had recognized him; they were staring and whispering excitedly. Peacock gave a quick casual glance and smiled modestly.

"Probably mistaking me for somebody else." He laughed indulgently. "Can you imagine whom I was taken for the other day?"

"Who?"

"Richard Dix! Can you beat that? Can you see the slightest resemblance between Dix and me? Not that Dix isn't a nice chap, understand. But can you see any resemblance?"

"No," I admitted; "you're different types."

"Well, a great many people say so," he insisted sharply. "It's always being said. You really don't see any resemblance?"

"Well, maybe a little, about the chin perhaps."

He smiled slightly. "As a matter of fact," he said, "Dix's chin is about his best point. He really has a marvellous chin. But what I've always said is, What is the sense of being pleased about looking like someone else? A man ought to want to look like himself, and himself alone. When people say I look like Richard Dix—and hundreds have told me so—I always thank them, because they no doubt intend it for a compliment. And—— Great heaven!"

I hope I may be excused for not seeing immediately that something of extraordinary importance had happened, but Peacock had more than once exclaimed just as dramatically, or nearly so, upon noting a new and perfectly commonplace bus boy in the room.

"Great hope of heaven!" he whispered and, pushing back his chair, rose and stood with hands clutching the edge of the table, his face white and set, his eyes fixed with a fearful, unbelieving light on someone or something behind me.

"Reg," I said, "what is it?" And I turned.

"Greta! My Greta!"

Two women, both around thirty, had entered the room and were following a captain of waiters through an aisle.

It was the second that Peacock was watching, staring at, oblivious, apparently, of the curious looks that had been drawn to him. I tried, but only a glimpse could I get of her face—not remarkable in the way of beauty. She was pleasant looking and smart in a manner that struck me as suburban. Then she sat down, still with her back toward us.

“Reg, old boy,” I begged him, “sit down and try to pull yourself together.”

He obeyed, but almost as though he hadn’t heard; and then I saw that he was, indeed, genuinely shaken. He murmured her name incredulously once or twice and pressed his hands to his eyes. This seemed to clear his head in some way, and he glanced about hastily and noted interested looks still directed at him, and this appeared to steady him.

“Amazing! Absolutely the most amazing thing I’ve ever known in my life!” he said. “I can scarcely believe it.”

“But what?” I repeated. “You know her?”

“Know her!” I might just as well have asked him if he’d ever heard of Napoleon Bonaparte; his surprise would have been no greater. “My dear Faber, do I know her!”

The way he said it gave me some relief; he was speaking heartily again, and with a fine dramatic emphasis. I reflected that all likelihood of his swooning from the shock had passed.

“Faber,” he said, fixing me with a steady eye, “this is the most extraordinary thing I have ever known off the stage. It is truly the most dramatic second I have ever known. That woman”—he paused to prepare me for the revelation—“is the only woman I have ever loved or ever will love. And until this second, when she entered the door like an apparition from the dead past, I have not seen her for ten years!”

This was the old Peacock speaking, and I could only murmur, “You overwhelm me, Reg.”

“Ten long, dreary years, Faber. Ten years of heartache, ten years of striving and achieving, ten years that would have been emptiness itself had it not been for my art, my career.”

I confess that for a moment this was a bit difficult for me to swallow. True that he was still unmarried, but he’d never been precisely an anchorite. He’d roved Broadway casually, pleasantly, even though he’d betrayed no passion for play. I could not remember any affair describable as more than passing, but my acquaintance was not of the closest.

"You have doubts," he said shrewdly; and reaching into an inside pocket he brought out a pigskin case worn to a lovely shining mahogany. For a few seconds he gazed at it with narrowed eyes, and then with a quick flip he laid it open on the tablecloth in front of me. Under a panel of celluloid was the woman who had just entered the room, as she was ten years ago, and privately I was still unable to find justification for this impressive gesture.

"Beautiful," I said.

"Ah, Faber," he said, shaking his head thoughtfully, "if you but knew what this moment means to me!"

"I'd like to hear it," I said, digging into my chicken shortcake. "Is it—is it too personal?"

"Well, I'll tell you," he stated, with the air of a man who has just decided to buy the United States Steel Corporation for cash in hand. "You would understand, Faber, and it would help you to understand me better. You'd be able to see why I have been—well, you might say an enigma to all Broadway for lo, these many years. It's a strange and tragic story, and if you have suspected that there was a shadow over my life, this may explain it."

He took the case, folded it after a last yearning glance, and returned it to his breast pocket.

"It was ten years ago she gave me that picture and case, in a little village in New Jersey where we'd both grown up, and since then it has never left my possession; I've never been without it, right here"—he smote his chest—"over my heart. . . . Pass me a roll, please."

He spoke then so earnestly that slowly but surely I was compelled to believe. My skepticism gradually disappeared, and if he recounted his story with what may have seemed a greater emphasis on the manner than on the matter, still that was his way—apparently his natural way of relating facts. I soon began to feel that behind his alarmingly vigorous eloquence, behind all his fervent histrionics was a rich and deep sincerity, a faithfulness rare and sweet and genuine.

"I was just out of college then, Faber, and you know what that means." He smiled indulgently. "I looked just about as I do now, with naturally more youth about my eyes, and my chin was even stronger. It may sound conceited—I dare say it is—but it remains a simple fact that I was something of a

town hero, though it was but a small town. Why should I deny it if it was true?"

"No reason at all," I assured him.

"I hadn't received that urge then to become an actor. It hadn't gripped me so that I knew that that was what my whole life was designed for, as it did later. Ah, Faber, that would be difficult to explain, so I shan't try. At that time I was casting about in my mind as to what to do, with no definite urge to do anything in particular.

"The only thought in my mind in those days was Greta, and my mother, of course—my father was dead. She was really marvellous; beautiful, intelligent, charming. Greta Hardwick. We'd known each other since childhood—tender little childhood—but it was not until after college that we were drawn together. That was one of the most natural things in the world, for she was certainly the real belle of the town; and nearly everybody rather regarded me as a kind of hero on account of my baseball playing at school. As it happens in small towns, we were sort of thrown together, and I soon came to understand her beautiful charm.

"We strolled on the banks of a stream, Faber, hand in hand, as you may have seen in pictures. We went to dances together and wandered out into the moonlight together. I took her to moving-picture shows and the theatre when a play came to town. We were always together. It was the most beautiful memory I have, a thing that can never leave my mind for a moment. . . . There's Heywood Broun just sitting down over there."

I turned and looked. "The chap with his hair uncombed?"

"Yes. Great fellow, Heywood. One of my best friends. Gave me marvellous notices. . . . And slowly but surely this great love began to catch hold of my heart. Perhaps if everything had run smoothly then, I would not be here at this moment; Reginald Peacock's name would be unknown to the American public; you would be dining with someone else. It just goes to show how things turn out.

"My happiness, however, was not destined to last. Kismet had another fate in store for me. After about a year out of school I began to consider my responsibilities. I mean my mother, whom I adored. She had an excellent position in the local department store as head of the sales force, but I realized

that that could not go on forever. She was getting on in years, and there were silver threads in her lovely hair, Faber—silver threads among the gold, as the song has it. Soon she'd have to give it up. I had to think about the future.

"There was no thought of the stage in my head at all; my idea was to get a job there in town, where everybody knew and loved me, and where I'd be near Greta. That was all I wanted—to be there near Greta. So I asked a bit around among the business men. I really got marvellous encouragement, but times were tight then and everybody was cutting down forces. But there was really no great hurry; my mother, the dear old soul, was in no way approaching feebleness at that time.

"Then I had an idea. Greta's father owned the drug store. Why not go to him and go to work in the drug store? After all, I figured it, his daughter and I would be getting married, and some day—well, you know, if anything happened I'd have some knowledge of the business. It could continue, and the old gentleman could pass on happy in the knowledge that the business he'd built up and loved would be in good hands. The work of a lifetime, you might say, would not crumble the instant he left it." He paused. "Perhaps I was wrong, but I didn't think so.

"My notion, Faber, was to step in, begin at a nominal salary, and learn the business from the ground up; and when—well, when anything happened, I'd be here on the spot to take control. So I went directly to Mr. Hardwick and put the proposition up to him. I explained it just as I've explained it to you. I said I was ready to start at the bottom and work up. Do you know—can you imagine, what he said?"

"No."

"He said I wouldn't do." Peacock's lips shut for an instant in a tight line. "He said I—I, Faber, who this day can get up forty sides in two days—would not do. What he wanted, he said, was a licensed pharmacist. Figuring that perhaps he hadn't grasped the situation, I explained it again, and again he said no.

"Well, I can only intimate to you how miserable this made me. It was, really, the collapse of all my dreams. I simply stood there, Faber, thinking to myself: 'Here my mother, my adored mother, is getting along in years; here is a position I

could fill and so provide for her in her old age!’ And here was the father of the girl I was going to marry rejecting my application. Imagine it, Faber—just imagine a situation like that! . . . Elsie Janis just came in—good kid, Elsie.

“But I wasn’t angry—just hurt. I spoke to Greta about it, and she promised to speak to her old man—her father. I asked her to explain the situation to him, that he was liable—well, something was liable to happen to him, and there I’d be, ready to take the rudder, as it were, from his palsied hand. . . . Are you eating your butter?”

“No; help yourself.”

“Thanks. I love butter. Give me plenty of butter and I’m happy. . . . Then something happened which set my blood to boiling. After all, I was young—just a boy—and hot-headed, and now that I am older and more settled, I see that my impulsiveness was a gigantic mistake.

“But listen closely. A few days later I was walking down the street and whom should I meet but Greta with another chap, a thin fellow with yellow hair? We were introduced, and he—listen—was a Mr. Langley—Mr. Guy Langley, ‘who’s coming to work for Father.’ Did you get that? ‘Who’s coming to work for Father?’!”

He leaned back, holding me with two eyes that gleamed with emotion.

“This was Mr. Langley, Mr. Guy Langley, who was coming to work for Father,” he repeated, sitting back and endeavouring with some difficulty to control himself. “Faber, you may believe it or not, but at that moment everything went red before me—everything! Not,” he hastened to add, “that Langley may not have been a good man and pharmacist. I don’t say that at all. But everything went red, nevertheless. And now ask yourself how you’d feel if you had an adorable mother to support and the father of the girl you intended to marry denied you what practically amounted to food and shelter for this sweet, white-haired old mother and brought in over your head—over your head, mind you!—an outsider with yellow hair simply because he claimed to be an apothecary—ask yourself that.”

“Well, it was blamed tough,” I said. “I can see that.”

“Tough? It was outrageous! Faber, when she told me that, I’m telling you honestly, I shook all over—like that.” And

he shook horribly all over for me. "I shook like a leaf, Faber—like a little leaf in a big storm."

He sat back and breathed heavily.

"But no," he said then, "I shouldn't give way to anger like that. After all, I was a boy, and too young to judge accurately. I really have no one to blame but myself. But I had to see Greta alone, to talk it over; and I did, that night, for the last time, Faber, until she walked in that door a few minutes ago. . . . Broun's leaving; I wonder what's the matter.

"And that night I made an error which has shadowed my life ever since. But it was a marvellous set, Faber. I really wish you could have seen it. We met on the banks of a tiny rippling stream which meanders in and out at the foot of the town." He leaned over and simulated a tiny rippling stream meandering in and out. "There it lay, or rather flowed, gleaming and glistening and babbling as it played in and out among the smooth boulders." With one eloquent hand he showed how it played among the boulders. "Beyond and behind and all around," he explained, waving both arms to indicate a panorama, "the towering majesty of tall trees at night, like a magnificent back drop, and Greta and I stood in the midst of this natural glory with blue moonlight falling over us like a baby spot. I really wish you could have seen it, Faber, because I've never known anything like it, on the stage or off. . . . Waiter, more butter.

"There, in that magnificent set, I made my mistake. But it was so fine, so overwhelming, that I could not have spoken otherwise. It was a natural climax, so when she came, in all her loveliness, I spoke directly, for such scenes can't lag, Faber, if they're to be effective.

"I said, 'Greta,' and my voice was low and—well, murmurous, 'did you speak to your father again?' She was silent for just a moment, a good tense moment, and then she replied so near a whisper I scarcely heard, 'Yes.' 'Then,' I said, slightly louder and with more firmness, for I knew that this answer would be the—well, the big line, 'what did he say?' I didn't speak harshly or in any tone that might offend her. I just said it like this"—and he lowered his voice and looked steadily into my eyes—"Then what did he say? That's the way I said it.

"She looked up at me like this"—he looked up at me—"and

her face was like a white petal—like a white petal, that's what it was like, there in the moonlight. 'I'm sorry, Reginald,' she said, 'but he says he needs a licensed pharmacist.' Well!"

He shrugged and spread both hands with an air of hopeless helplessness, knocking a saltcellar to the floor; oblivious of it, he shook his head sadly, with a little wistful smile on his face.

"You see, Faber? You see how it was? I was just a boy, and what would any boy's natural reaction be but that she'd scarcely made much of an effort to help me to support my mother? An older man might have said to himself, 'Well, she's tried her best; why blame her for her father's lack of foresight?' An older man might have said, 'Well, give her another chance.' But I was just a kid, Faber—a great big kid, that's all.

"And so, like a great big boyish kid, I became cold with resentment. She had betrayed me. It was not the job—oh, no, Faber, it was never the job I considered. I could have got a hundred jobs, or a thousand; all I had to do was look for one. It was the principle of the thing. I had given her the opportunity to render me a trifling service and she had not seen fit to do it. That was what I thought."

"So you left," I said slowly.

"We walked together out of that still moonlit scene—together but apart, no longer the single soul we had been. We walked back down the dark quiet streets silently, and I left her at her door. Late that night I was aboard the train bound for New York—and fame."

He pushed back his dishes and lighted a cigarette with trembling hands.

"Well——" I commented, uncertain as to what I should say, when he interrupted quickly.

"No," he said sharply, "don't try to console me. Whatever you had in mind to say, I know that I made a mistake—though a boyish mistake, to be sure. There's no need trying to tell me I did right; in my heart I feel that I didn't. It was a horrible mistake that I have paid for every hour of every day since. It brought no comfort when after years I came to see what I should have done."

"What was that?" I asked curiously.

"Go look for another job, of course. That's precisely what I should have done, but it didn't occur to me then. But that's

where I made my mistake, the mistake I've paid for—by not going out for another job."

He leaned across the table again, and there was a look of such earnestness, such pathetic unhappiness, that I scarcely recognized the fairly self-centred actor I had entered with.

"Don't you see, Faber," he asked simply—"can't you see that I loved her, that I love her still? I made a mistake, a boyish mistake, but should I have to pay for it forever? There hasn't a day passed, Faber, that this picture hasn't been here at my heart; not a day that I didn't curse the rashness which made me leave her. And now—there she sits, in the same room with me. I could raise my voice and she'd hear me."

"What happened after you left?"

"After I left," he said slowly, "she married her—her apothecary. They moved to Jersey City, after selling the store, and three years ago her husband died. She's been living there with her mother ever since."

I framed my next question with some difficulty. The sight of the girl, the recollection of the pathetic mistake, had shaken him so that I hesitated to speak at all; but, I admit, I was curious.

"But, Reg," I said, picking my words as carefully as possible, "if you loved her, love her still, as you say, and she did love you, why, if I may ask, haven't you gone to her, or telephoned her, or written to her? I mean to say, she's there, very near. Her husband is dead; she is free. Why haven't you made some effort to see her?"

"What?" He seemed surprised at the idea.

"Well," I insisted, "I can't see why your way isn't clear now to go to her, if you still love her—and, if I may outrage your modesty, you should be even more considerable as a suitor than you were ten years ago. I mean," I floundered, "after all, you're Reginald Peacock, and that should mean something——"

"That's just it," he interrupted sharply. "That's exactly why I haven't made an effort to see her."

"I don't understand."

"Faber," he said earnestly, "it's clear that she doesn't want me, else she'd come to me. She's lived there in Jersey City for several years. During that time my name has been flung on every billboard in Jersey, my picture in every paper.

For eight—no, eight and a half months I was starred in *Howdy, Queen*, as successful a farce as Broadway has known in ten years. For nine months I was featured in the *Night Judge*. For six months I was in *Ship Ahoy*, and touring the subway circuit, Jersey City, Newark, and Brooklyn. For four months I was featured in *Goody Goody*. All that time my name has never been in type smaller than that of the title of the show—a clause in my contract. And still, with my name before her face practically every day for the past seven years, she has not seen fit to telephone me or even drop me a line, much less come to see me. Doesn't that indicate to you that she has no desire to see me?"

"Not at all," I replied. "After all, she's an obscure Jersey City housewife; you're a famous actor on Broadway. What does she know but that you laugh at those days in your home town? The likelihood is that she is dying to see you—and afraid of your reputation."

"You really think that might be it?" Clearly it was a new idea to him.

"I do," I said, and, growing bolder: "I don't like to advise you in such a matter, but if I were you, Reg, I'd go over and talk to her now—as good a chance as any." I looked around. "That other woman's gone; she's alone now. If you're sincere——"

He clutched the table, wrestling with the problem, and his eyes turned eagerly, anxiously toward her. Then he rose.

"Faber," he said, "thank you. You were what I needed—a prodder. Come with me. Give me a little backing. After all, old man, I'm nervous, shaken."

We walked across the dining room together. Peacock's face was white, but there was no questioning his firmness of purpose. He stood at her table for the briefest of seconds, and then spoke softly: "Greta."

She turned, looked, and in her eyes I saw that same incredulous light of happiness. "Reginald?" she exclaimed, and he sat down opposite her. It was only by his moving over that either of them indicated that they knew I was there, or even alive. I took the place he offered and pulling out a notebook, pretended to be absorbed in something else. For minutes they did not speak, merely sat and looked at each other, wrapped in thoughts which were not for anyone else.

Then: "Oh, Reg, I'm so glad—so terribly glad! It's a dream, Reg, a dream! You look so natural, so like—like those old days."

"And you, Greta—you, too. It makes me think—I can't tell you, dear, how happy I am, how marvellous this is. To think, it's been ten years—ten long, dreary years since—since we—we last saw each other."

The same thought came to both of them then—the thought of that night by the brook, with the tall trees throwing long shadows in the blue moonlight, and they fell again into silence.

"I heard," he said then softly, "about your bereavement—and I was so sorry, Greta."

"Thank you, Reg. I knew you'd be if you heard. Guy was a faithful husband."

I suddenly wanted to look at her when she said that; it was such a curious epitaph for the late deceased. But I dared not; I kept to my notebook study.

"I didn't know him very well," Reg said, "but because he was yours, I felt—somehow I felt bad when he—went."

"The truth was, Reg," she said—and then her voice dropped so low that I heard no more. He answered in something like happy surprise; and then they talked, heads together, smiling happily into each other's eyes while I risked fleeting glances. I was really thrilled; there was, after all, something very near drama here. Beside me were two life threads being drawn together once more after ten long years of separation. I shamelessly wished I could hear, but they no longer spoke up; they were whispering now.

I gave up the effort to eavesdrop presently; I set myself to wait patiently until it should be found advisable to notice me. It was not a short wait, for me, and I'd have become annoyed had my interest in the situation been less. Diners were drifting out, and soon the room was nearly empty, and waiters looked sorrowfully at our table.

Then Reg turned, his eyes bright and excited. "Faber," he said, and he moved nearer—"Greta, this is Horace Faber, a very good friend of mine. He knows the whole story, so if you don't mind I'll tell him."

She smiled happily. "Of course, dear."

"Faber, old man," he said, putting one arm about my

shoulders, "you're being present at the end of the story—the happy end of the story. You're sitting in the presence of the same old Greta of the old days, the girl who loved me when I was a boy. She hasn't changed, Faber. My love"—and he drew out the worn leather case and opened it—"my love, which hasn't failed a single day, is being rewarded, old man."

"Reg, I can't tell you how happy I am."

"Thanks, old boy. We're both happy. What happened," he said slowly, "after I left home has not altered either of us in any way. That came and passed, and now it's to be forgotten. In short, we're going to be married—within a week at the most."

I beamed as broadly as either of them, and again they sat staring into each other's eyes.

"What a day! What a marvellous, miraculous day!" he murmured. "After ten years!" He spoke thoughtfully. "Ten years of waiting, ten years of waste. But, darling, why should you have been afraid or frightened? Why couldn't you have got word to me—just a note, or a telephone call, anything to let me know?"

"But, darling"—she laughed—"how on earth could I? I didn't know where you were. I didn't even know what line you were in." She turned to me. "We've been so excited"—she laughed again—"I haven't even asked him what line he's in."

"What?" The question came in a half-choked voice.

I looked at Peacock, suddenly frightened. His face, the smile gone, had become an apoplectic purple. His eyes bulged dangerously. He seemed on the verge of a stroke as he caught the edges of his chair convulsively.

"What did you say?" he repeated.

"Why, Reg," she exclaimed in distress, "what is the matter?"

"What did you say?"

"Reg, I just said, what line are you in?"

Slowly, trembling with barely controlled fury, he shoved his chair back, his gleaming savage eyes never leaving her suddenly distracted face. Then he stood up and bowed to her.

"Good-evening," he said, and turned and walked swiftly toward the door, his back as eloquent of his temper as his face.

As much embarrassed as the poor woman, I struggled with futile explanations for a second; and then, to my intense relief, Greta's woman friend came back to the table.

Mumbling words of apology and farewell, I darted for the cloakroom, got my hat and stick, and set out after Peacock. I caught him at the corner. He was standing over a corner trash can, tearing up the picture which he had ripped out of the leather case.

"Reg!" I said.

"Dull, blind, stupid little moron!" he was muttering between clenched teeth as he snatched the picture savagely into bits that he tossed viciously into the can. "Did you hear her? Could you believe it? Living in Jersey City for years and never heard—— Stupid little fool! How I could ever have thought that she—— But come, Faber, let's walk. I've got to cool off before going to the theatre."

O'MEARA, THE *MAYFLOWER*— AND MRS. MACLIRR

By DON MARQUIS

From *Scribner's*

IT'S a queer thing," said Terence O'Meara, with a wink at his brother Jack and a glance at the bald spot on the top of his father's head; "it's a queer thing that the Irish let the English and the French, the Spanish and the Dutch, all get ahead of them in exploring and settling America."

Mr. Timothy O'Meara, their father, had his face turned away from them, while he fumbled for a pipe cleaner in the case of a great old clock that stood on the mantel. He grunted.

"I could never understand it myself," said Jack O'Meara, with an answering wink to his brother. "Why were none of the Irish great navigators?"

The senior O'Meara's bald spot suddenly flushed red, and the veins in it began to swell, and his sons, chuckling softly, knew just how his face would look when they saw it.

"Why were none of them discoverers?" continued Jack rhetorically. "Great sailors, or great whalers, or notable pioneers?"

Mr. Timothy O'Meara turned slowly and impressively toward them, where they sat at the table over their after-dinner pipes and coffee, and scorn made streaks and lines through the heat of his countenance. But when he spoke it was with a measure of dignity.

"Shame to you both," said he, "and sorrow to me that has such sons! The greatest navigator of thim all, not aven barrin' Noah and his ark, was an Irishman! And the greatest whale-catcher of all times, not aven exceptin' Jonah, who used to proffer himself for bait, was an Irishman! Wan and the same Irishman they was, thim two, and his name was Timothy

O'Meara, the same as me own, and me ancestor he was."

He suddenly tossed something hard upon the table, which he had taken out of the clock case along with the pipe cleaner, and the object rattled among the dishes.

"And what's that?" said Jack.

The young men were used to seeing their father take anything and everything out of that clock case—valuable papers incidental to his contracting business, shirt studs and shoe strings, as well as bits of indeterminate junk of vast historical interest. Or, one might say, legendary interest, mythological interest, for the tales of Mr. O'Meara sometimes reeled and whirled and spun with an excess of imagination, as a muse might soar upon inebriate pinions. It was the delight of his sons to sting him to narration with insults; he usually retorted with an affectation of belief that his sons, who both had worthy records in the A. E. F., had really been dishonourably discharged from that organization.

"That," said Mr. O'Meara, "is a piece of Plymouth Rock. 'Twas chipped off by my ancestor, Timothy O'Meara, the day he landed the *Mayflower* outfit there, and quit his many wanderin's, and sittled down to colonize New England and America. And it has been kept in the family ever since, as a memento of the occasion."

He had a way of excluding his sons from the illustrious family in his stories as if they were unworthy to bear the name of O'Meara. Terence looked at the bit of stone, and it seemed to him that it bore a certain resemblance to a piece of rock that had once come out of the clock case as souvenir and evidence of the first gold discovery in California by a Timothy O'Meara. But he said nothing aloud. Internally he was asking himself:

"How the deuce is the old man going to get an Irish O'Meara aboard the *Mayflower*?"

There was a responsive wonder in Jack's countenance. Their father's visage was partially hidden again as he bowed his head over his leisurely pipe cleaning—if he was not wondering himself, he was at least arranging the details of his saga.

"Whales!" he murmured to himself, as he worked. "Whales!—not know whales? Of course he knew whales did Tim O'Meara the navigator!"

Whales [said Mr. O'Meara, his pipe filled with plug-cut and drawing sweetly], whales are the most misunderstood of all God's craytures, by the common ginerality of mankind. The whale is the grandest and most intilligent and most ginerous of the bastes that roam the world, and it takes a large and noble nature to understand the whale—and a large and noble nature was that of Timothy O'Meara, my ancestor, that I'm going to tell you about. When the world was made, and the firmamint was set up as siperates the hivens from the earth, the whale was put into the seas and oceans, because there is so much more wather than there is land; and the nobility of the whale is fitted to a spacious elemint. He floats in grandeur and magnificence amidst the splendour of the icebergs at the pole, and he leaps through the glory and power of the hurricanes like a trout that is sportin' amongst the ripples of a brook. He's a large baste with large ideas, more intellictual than the iliphant, and with a heart as tinder as wan of these little red-footed pigeons on the roof.

For he isn't anny fish, the whale isn't, but he's warm-blooded like a man or a dog, with more gratitude than the wan and less suspicion than the other—and I don't know why I'm sayin' "he" all the time, for the faymale whales is equally mammalian and ginteel.

'Twas this same Tim O'Meara I'm tellin' you of that understood whales as no man has ever understood thim before or afther, for the solitude and grandeur of the whale was in his own nature, and the melancholy of the whale was in his wild and tinder heart. And a roamer and a rover was this Tim O'Meara, and the rims of his eyelids was red with the salt of manny seas. 'Twas the woes of Ireland that drove him from her shores, and set him wanderin' here and there—the griefs of Ireland, and the impossibility of doin' annything about thim, on account of the Sassenach that was mainly causin' thim. I have no prejudices of anny kind in me heart against anny man nor anny man's country—unless a ginerel feelin' that 'twould be a good deal betther if there wasn't anny British Empire annywheres could be called a prejudice. Which it could not, for 'tis merely good sinse and sound logic. And this Tim O'Meara, me ancestor, was the same as me in his feelin's.

"If I could but spake to the King of England, Ireland, and Scotland personal," says he to himself oftentimes, "we might

patch somethin' up betwixt us. But I will not bandy words with anny man less than the King himsilf! 'Twould not be fiittin' for thim to do so that was kings in Ireland in the ould days. If I had me rights, wan of the thrones that he's sittin' on this day would be mine!"

And 'twas at sea he lived mostly, for the shores of inhabited countries would always put him in mind he didn't have anny happy country of his own; and 'twas fishin' and whalin' that he made his most notable success at. Greenland and Iceland was known to him, and the coasts of Labrador, and manny a wild rock that was islanded lonesome in the wild seas. 'Twos often he would sit in his boat amongst the sparklin' icebergs, singin' to his Irish harp, and watchin' them Scandinavian fishers and whalers goin' back and forth 'twixt North America and Norway—for the bould men came and went and fished and came again for long years before anny man bothered with the notion of makin' anny sittlements over here.

And wan day whilst he was sittin' on wan of his lonely islands, singin' to the sea gulls and the seals, he heard some great crayture bellowin' and moanin' and sighin' and whooshin' in the vicinity, and he clambered to an eminence of rock and gazed about him.

'Twos a big faymale whale, and she was rollin' her bulk about, and bangin' around and sprawlin' hersilf against a reef near by, which the ebbin' tide had lift uncovered.

"What's the baste doin'?" says Tim to himsilf. And then he realized she was moanin' with pain as she batthered herself and twisted against the crooked stones.

"She's scratchin' her back on the reef," says Tim. And it puzzled him, for he'd never heard these bastes had fleas. He got into his dory and rowed out as near as he dared to the turmoil she was makin'. And then he saw that she was scratchin' her back indade.

Half a dozen broken harpoons was stickin' into it, and the intilligent animal was tryin' to get them caught and hooked amongst the crooked rocks of the reef and pull and scrape herself rid of thim.

"Poor crayture!" says Tim. For though he had hunted manny a wan of thim to its death, gradual he had come to sympathize with thim and pity thim, for it was gettin' to his

mind that they're really tinder-hearted bastes, full of kindness and gentleness there ain't anny feasible way for thim to expriss. "Poor crayture!" says Tim.

And just thin she cocked her eye in his direction, the poor sufferin' mammalian, and looked at him as speculative and considerin' and pitiful as a stray pup with a thorn in his foot. And she lay quiet and moaned.

"Do ye want me to pull thim out, ma'am?" says Tim, his heart bleedin' for her.

There was somethin' so respectable lookin' about her, like she might be the mother of ten childher, all bloated up with cares and nursin' and tay-drinkin' and housework, that he couldn't hilp callin' her ma'am.

She moaned again, and looked at him steady—a whale bein' the only wan of God's other craytures that can look a Christian steady in the eye and give him thought for thought. And that way they continued to gaze at aich other for some minutes, and the kindness that was in the heart of aich wan pinitrated to the bosom of the other—and there ain't anny matronly crayture annywheres that has an ampler bosom than a faymale whale.

"I'll do it, ma'am," says Timothy O'Meara, as she moaned again, and he stipped aboard of her and begun pullin' out harpoons.

"Roll over a bit, till I get that ugly divil out of your side," says Tim. And, as if she understood, she rolled a bit, standin' the pain of all this extraction with the gallantry and fortitude of a woman. He blushed when he saw 'twas one of his own old harpoons, with his initials in the shaft of it.

"And I'd ax your pardon, ma'am, if I thought ye remimbered," says Tim; "I would that—Mrs. MacLirr!"

For it came to him with a rush and a shout what the name of the baste should be. The old and ancient Irish deity of the boundless seas, before Saint Patrick came and made us Christians (praise God!), was Mananan MacLirr, and this hugeous and intilligent baste, Timothy perceived, could be none other thin the wife of Mananan MacLirr, she herself. And 'twas always Mrs. MacLirr he called her ever afther that.

"Now, thin, Mrs. MacLirr," says Tim, "there's but one more, and I'll be as aisy as I can!"

But 'twas nearly Tim's destruction, for when Mrs. MacLirr felt the last barb lave her body she gave such a jump of joy and gratitude as took her twinty fathoms toward the smilin' sun, and down again she spankled her two thousand hundredweight into the wather, while the bould Tim wint whirlin' through a flock of screamin' gulls.

Back he swum to land, and from the beach he saw her out at sea, leapin' and cavortin' in her joy, and blowin' great fountains into the air.

And then she came as near as she could to the shore where she saw him standin'. And she poked first one eye out of the wather and thin the other, and she rolled and capered—tryin' to thank him, she was.

"Don't minton it, Mrs. MacLirr!" says Tim, smilin' at the poor crayture, and at the same time feelin' the pathos of her, too. For 'tis one of the most touchin' things about a whale that she has inside of her the sprightliness and coyness and good humour of a pup or a kitten, and wants to frolic and fawn and cuddle in her friends' laps; and coupled with that she has the bulk of an ocean liner.

If I hadn't heard it from me own grandfather and he from his granddad before him, and so by word of mouth down a line of O'Mearas, I would find it hard meself to belave all the details of the frindship that grew up between Mrs. MacLirr and Timothy O'Meara. On all his voyages hither and yon she accompanied him and 'twas for her sake he give up huntin' whales entirely. It was through her introduction and patronage that he became acquainted in a friendly way with manny another of thim splendid and poetic lords of the briny Atlantic.

Often he would sit in a cave on a rocky island playing the wild traditional music on his Irish harp, and singin' his Gaelic songs across the waves, with the aurora borealis hangin' over him like a halo, and Mrs. MacLirr leapin' in the moonlight. And sometimes as manny as twinty or thirty of her friends would join her for a social avenin'; over whole leagues of tameless wather the harp of the O'Meara would be flingin' its strains of music, and the sea would be spoutin' and boilin' with the magnificent dances of the whales, and misty moonbeams driftin' over all!

He made a kind of a harness that fitted over Mrs. Mac-

Lirr's big head and fastened his boat to it with a rope, and he gave up sailin' entirely, for it was slow work and useless compared with the propulsion and the power that was now at his command. Or sometimes he would sit upon her back with the boat trailin' along behind and guide her by tappin' her on one side of the head or the other, like wan of thim Orientals does with an iliphant. And a fine sight it must have been to see Mrs. MacLirr and me ancestor, Timothy O'Meara, ridin' a storm—with Timothy singin' and playin' his wild minstrelsy out of his wild heart, and the forked tongues of lightnin' showin' the gleeful eyes of Mrs. MacLirr and the floatin' red beard and hair of Timothy O'Meara as they bulged across the boilin' seas.

One time ('twas in the winter of 1620 anno domino is the word as it came down to me), Mrs. MacLirr and me bould ancestor were cruisin' quietly along about sunset, two or three hundherd miles due east of the prisint site of Boston, when what should they see limpin' up from the horizon like a draggled-wing duck but one of thim small ships.

Timothy could tell aven at that distance that she was some sort of a family ship with but little nautical knowledge aboard of her annywheres, from the way she was bein' handled, and he steered Mrs. MacLirr nearer to her.

It was very near indade he got before aither of thim was noticed by the people on boord, for there was some kind of a row goin' on in the midst of this little windjammer that previnted anny of thim from takin' notice. Tim circled round her and came up behind and he noticed a signboard on the stern with the word *Mayflower* painted onto it with big letters. And just about the time he noticed that, Mrs. MacLirr, bein' full of fayminine curiosity, cocked her starboard eye over the rail of the vissil to take a look at what was transpirin' on the deck. And at the same time she opened her mouth to smile, bein' friendly by nature, and no longer frightened at the ways and works of humankind.

Anny wan that ain't used to havin' a whale ogle him in the eye and raise up and smile at him is apt to be narvous at the first expariance. And the people on boord the *Mayflower* are scarcely to be blamed for not realizin' the beneficence of Mrs. MacLirr's interest, for her lineamints was decaivin'.

There was one ginerall shout from the scores of people

gathered on the deck, and they scurried in all directions. But they couldn't run far, for the ship was small. And all the time they was cryin' out.

"A witch! A witch!" Timothy heard a dozen of thim call at the same time.

"She is a witch and she has called up a fiend out of the deep to save her!" says wan man.

"'Tis the devil ridin' upon a dragon!" says another.

Tim, he leaped to the deck, and he walked right up to a solemn-lookin' man in black, who was standin' steady, with a hymn book in wan hand and a soord in the other, apparently too proud to let himself be scairt, and he says to him very polite, says Tim:

"I'm the O'Meara, at your service, sir; and I am not plased with bein' mistook for the divil. I'll thank ye, sir, to ordher these people of yours to be more civil, or else there'll be trouble aboard the *Mayflower*. I take ye for the boss of this outfit, and I speak to ye as such."

"Mr. O'Meara," says this fella with the soord, "your appearance was the trifle unexpicted, as ye come red-bearded on that monster out of th' bloody wathers of the sunset. And I was shaken m'silf for a moment, albeit I have fought both man and fiend. And ye came on us dazzlin' like the flames of Tophet," says he, "at a time when we were considerin' most serious matters of a ghostly nature."

"Be that as it may," says Tim, "go aisy with the divil stuff, or ye'll have to lave my part of the ocean. I'm a sinsitive man, and I will not be miscalled out of me name. And what are these serious matters of yours?"

The man with the sword pointed to a lass that Tim now noticed for the first time.

Standin' by the mast she was, gold-haired and beautiful with her chin in the air and a fire in her eyes. He seen manny of that ship's company was against her, and his heart wint out to her at wance, as was ever the case with Tim O'Meara whin he seen virtue and beauty in distress.

"She is on trial," says the man with the soord.

"She's innocent!" says Tim, prompt as a fist. "What's she charged with?"

"She whistled like a man," says he, "and that is an un-

seemly thing in a maiden. And she danced with her shadow as one possessed by demons might. And when one of the cocks crew, she crew again like a cock."

"What great matther is all this!" says Tim.

"Is this not the Sabbath day?" says he.

"Ye have the advantage of me there," says Tim. "'Tis more than a year since I lost count. Come hither, colleen!"

The girl came forward, and she looked Tim straight between the eyes. And all the ship's company gathered as near as they dared, for their fright still clung to them.

"Are ye guilty of these terrible crimes, as charged, my dear?" says Tim, smilin' at the darlin' thing.

"The sunshine seemed good," says she, smilin' back at him, "and I cut a bit of a caper on the deck."

There was a groan wint up from manny on that ship, but Tim and this swate crayture was lookin' so intintly at wan another they never heeded it.

"They were plannin' to duck me over the side," said she, "and I cried out for help. And then you came, and they said I was a witch and had called up a fiend from the sea!"

Tim, his forehead turned as red as his hair with exasperation. "Fine doin's this is!" says he, turnin' on thim all. "Where do you come from?"

They tould him they was fleein' from England.

"'Tis more or less me own case," says Tim. "There's much in common between us—though I'll be damned if I can precisely put the name on it! At anny rate," says he, "we're both at outs with England—and that's somethin'! Drop this nonsinse about the colleen here, and I'll let ye sail the rest of the way acrost me ocean," he says. "But otherwise," says he, "Mrs. MacLirr and me will have siviral things to say to youse."

"Mrs. MacLirr?" says the man with the soord.

"Me pet whale there," says Tim.

They all turned toward her, where she was loomin' over the port side of the vissil, waitin' on Tim's word—and Tim noticed a curious thing: Mrs. MacLirr's eye was fastened in a stare upon the lass that Tim was befriendin', and there was a glint like 'twas jealousy in her look. And the girl looked back at Mrs. MacLirr with no friendliness in her gaze.

When they seen Mrs. MacLirr lookin' like that, and the girl lookin' back at her, the anxiety of thim Mayflowers was aroused again.

"Burn her!" says wan ould woman, with the shriek of a banshee in her voice. "Burn Mary Mullins—she's a witch!" And manny of the rist of thim began to murmur and repate it.

"Mrs. MacLirr," says Tim, "will you kindly open your mouth a few fathoms?"

And whin she done so he pointed at it loomin' forninst the ship there, and he says: "If there is anny more talk about burnin' this young woman, or about witchcraft," says he, "into that mouth ye go, two at a time, as fast as I can throw ye from the deck here!"

And with Mrs. MacLirr dominatin' the situation in that way, Timothy had the trump hand for the minute. But at the same time he was worried, for his words and actions only seemed to make thim the surer that there must be witchcraft somewheres about, and that Mary Mullins had called him up by the power of witchcraft to save her.

He called her to one side, and he bade the others to stand back while he conferred with her—and as he done so he realized that the circumstance looked bad in itself, in the eyes of the ship's company.

"Mary Mullins, my dear," says he, "I don't seem to be really helpin' you anny, with all the will in the world to do so. But there's wan thing certain, there's none shall burn ye, my child, while Timothy O'Meara is bossin' this part of the ocean!"

She laughed and she said: "Thank ye, Mr. O'Meara! And they wouldn't dare try to, annyhow, on the ship here. They couldn't do it without burnin' the ship. It's a function they will have to postpone until we land somewheres."

"By the Lord," says Tim, "thin they'll niver land! I'll take you aboard Mrs. MacLirr with me, and we'll batther the ould tub to pieces!"

"Ye'll not do that," says she, "for there's manny good people on boord here."

"That's what's the matther with thim, evidintly," says Tim, "they're too good!"

She laughed at that again, and thin she said: "No, Mr. O'Meara, I mane manny fine men and women, that would

have nothin' to do whatever with this witchcraft idea if they were not scared to death. There's me sister Priscilla," she says, "as swate a girl as iver lived; and there's a couple of young men as is tryin' to shine up to her—dacent people, all of thim. And they'll have to be landed," says she, "or we'll never get the United States of America started."

"Mary Mullins," says Tim, "how did ye come by that name? It sounds Irish to me."

"There must be Irish blood in us somewheres, Tim," says she, "or how could we have the name? And I think 'tis that Irish blood they're mistakin' for diviltry," says she. "They don't understand laughin' and dancin' and fancifulness."

And she smiled at me bould Tim, with the come hither in her eyes—and there's no use postponin' the revelation anny longer; from that instant they was both madly in love with aich other.

"Moira," says Tim, just above a whisper, "by the hivens, I think 'tis a witch ye are, indade!"

"Tim," says she, in a low voice, laughin' and lookin' about her, "I belave ye have the rights of it! Sometimes I think I am!"

"'Tis somethin' to be carefully presarved, and not banished out of the world," says he.

He urged her once more to come with him at once. But she would not lave her sister behind her, nor anny other of the wans she liked.

"Tim," she says, "ye must be aisy with these people! For they'll niver get to land unless ye hilp thim. The rudder's gone from the ould tub now, and a bit of a gale would finish things."

"Come aboard Mrs. MacLirr with yer sister!" says Tim, "and be damned to the rist of thim!"

"No," says she; "and while we're on the subject, I don't like this Mrs. MacLirr of yours anny too well. And by the looks of her, she doesn't like me!"

And Mrs. MacLirr was peerin' at Tim and Moira in a way to confirm that, her eyes red and jealous.

There wasn't but wan way that Tim could see—to stay aboard the ship with the colleen until it landed, to protect her, and thin to marry her and take her away. So he harnessed Mrs. MacLirr to the *Mayflower*, and he give her the signal

full-speed-ahead, and whin the nixt morning came he drew up by the side of Plymouth Rock—the date he always remembered, 'twas the siventeenth of March, Patrick's Day. 'Tis written on that bit of rock somewheres, if it hasn't been rubbed off.

And Timothy and Moira climbed aboard Mrs. MacLirr and sailed off and was married and sittled South Boston, which was the first permanent sittlemint in New England, and predominates with their kinsmen to this day. And if you don't belaiue that, go and look it up in the Boston tilphone directory. And that's how the United States of America got its start, praise God!

And [said Jack] they lived happy in South Boston ever after!

I wish [said the old gentleman] as I could say the end was all happiness. But the truth is, it wasn't.

The most inordinate, unpleasant, and unraisonable jealousy sprung up betwixt Moira O'Meara and Mrs. MacLirr. For Tim, he went no more arovin', and Mrs. MacLirr used for to spout and caper in vain in the harbour below where the O'Mearas had built their house and was raisin' their childher. Tim, he paid but little attention to her; but Moira, she would call out to her now and thin: "Go away, you great ugly baste you!" For well she knew that Mrs. MacLirr was trying to tempt her husband back to the wild, free life he'd lived before he married and sittled down, and that's a thing as no wife ever likes.

And wan spring Mrs. MacLirr disappeared, and ceased to haunt the harbour, and Moira believed she was rid of her, and of the menace of her, foriver. And as for Tim, with the fickleness of all men, he thought nothin' more about Mrs. MacLirr's tinder heart, wan way or the other, nor did he realize how bruised it was by his neglect. He should have known that the intilligent and sinsitive whale, bein' one of the most lovin' of all bastes, is therefore equally agitated whin tis insulted. For after Mrs. MacLirr had been gone six weeks, back she come one afthernoon, and a hundherd whales was with her!

'Twas in the afthernoon of a breezy day whin Tim and Moira seen thim comin' into the harbour, and 'twas a sight

majestic and splendid to see these noble monsters of the spacious deep movin' forward in naval formation, jettin' great fountains into the air, which the wind whipped to spray and the sunlight wove into flauntin' rainbows.

"Tim," says his wife, turnin' pale, for she had recognized Mrs. MacLirr in the lead of thim, "they mane deviltry!"

"They do not," says Tim; "they're all my ould frinds! They've called on us for a bit of a frolic and some music!"

And he wint and got his harp, and sated himself upon a rock in front of his house, and out acrost the movin' wathers he flung the wild music of his ancestors. And he sang the afthernoon away, and the rainbows ceased when the sun laid low and level in the sky, and all thim scores of great mammalians danced in the red sunset; they danced a dance that was like the sport of naked thunders in the caves above the firmamint where the ragin' storms is made.

"They intind no good," says Moira; "they're workin' thimselves up to do some mischief!"

"They're wild with joy," says Tim; "they've found the O'Meara and his music again!"

And he harped the sunset out, and with the twilight the wather changed from burnin' brass to silver, and he harped the twilight out, and with the gatherin' dusk the wather turned to fire again; a phosphorescent fire it was that spouted when they blew and rose and waved like plumes and fell again.

"'Tis hatred and revinge they are afther!" cried Moira.

"They come in love and frindship!" says Tim, exalted with his ringin' harp.

And which it was no wan iver knew. As the dark thickened they all turned in the sea as one whale, at a signal from Mrs. MacLirr, and came rushin' up the beach on the crest and reach of the risin' tide, as if they would fling themselves flamin' out of their fiery sea against the O'Meara house and the rocks on which it stood.

"The saints defend us!" screamed Moira, her knees turning wake and feeble.

Mrs. MacLirr was in the lead and comin' fast, but the wather receded from in under her far up the shore, and she hit her head against a point of rock and groaned and died; and a dozen more was stranded and extinguished perishin' like exploded rockets.

But Mrs. MacLirr, she give Tim just wan look before she died.

"I'm afraid," says Tim, lookin' melancholy at Mrs. MacLirr's remains, "that she's committed suicide out of a broken heart! Why couldn't ye have been nicer to her, Moira?"

"She tried to murther us all!" says Moira.

And nobody is quite sure to this day which the truth was. But it give Timothy and Moira somethin' to argue about for manny years—which is always a handy thing in ivery marriage. But don't ayther wan of you iver tell me again that the Irish niver projuced anny great navigators, nor great sailors, nor great whalers, nor great pioneer settlers; or I'll take wan of youse over aich knee and larrup ye, as I have done often in the past and as I am still well able to do, praise God!

LIGHTNING

By WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

From Pictorial Review

BUT how in the world did you ever come to take me for Lester? That's what gets me. Yes, I know you ain't seen either of us for three years, and taking into account how much we favour each other it'd be natural enough if you wasn't to be just sure which one of us it was. Coming on me suddenly this way, sitting by a mountain shack a hundred miles from nowhere, you might well've hesitated. But there's the point: you never did. No, there you come around the corner, give me one look, hold out your hand as if before you thought, and, "Why, good heavens! Hullo, Lester!" says you. "Where's John?"

And all the while, *me John!*

Well, then, you say, where's Lester? Well, Lester's all right. Look here, I know you, and I'd trust you with my last cent. Only you know how things go. And they might still get Lester for that, I s'pose. The law's that way. The law would never take into account that no fatal harm ever come to no one through it (as it turns out—oh, yes, I've heard)—no more'n it'd take into account that Lester is—well—different. No, let's leave Lester where he is, if it's all the same to you.

But your taking *me* for *him*, without so much as a quiver; that's the queer thing. You never mistook us in the old days, nor anyone else. Why, anybody in town could've said in a wink this one's Lester or this one's John. How could they? You know better'n I do. And yet they do say that no matter how much twins favour each other, yet if you're used to 'em there's something different.

I don't know. But there was a man once told me that twins was queer that way. I can't say what there is in it, but this man was telling me that oftentimes twins wasn't quite all there—no, not meaning it *that* way. It's hard to state. But it's

as if you was to say there wasn't quite enough of everything to go round, and when they was born they had to divide up the best they could, one taking more of this—health, say, or bravery or ambition—and the other going stronger on imagination and second sight. D'you believe that? I don't know's I do, yet I don't know's I *don't*.

Only look here. I can say it where another couldn't. You know as well as I do that there was a difference between Lester and me. As a boy I was stronger'n Lester. If there was a kite in a tree, I was the one to climb the tree. If we had to go anywheres after dark, I went first. Or when it come to making a living I was the one to undertake it. Mind, I ain't complaining. I was glad to do it. Lester was the quiet one. It come natural to me. From the time we was left I just took it for granted I was the one to do for both; it was as natural for me to undertake and to do as it was for me to drop everything when I see a thunder tempest coming and run hunt up Lester.

You never knew why Lester was scared of lightning, did you? But you knew he was. Yes, for I remember 'twas you and Tom Lake come with me that night the herring factory was struck and we found Lester jammed so tight under the wood-shed floor, to home, we had to pry off a plank to get him clear. Yes, I remember 'twas you, and how you give him a look and then spit onto the ground. Well, it give me a bad taste, too, for I hadn't never been that scared of anything in my life, same as *he* looked to be. But you didn't know, and neither did I. It was about a year after that that I found out.

Course, I always knew he was scared of lightning. Many and many's the night I been waked by a tempest to find Lester in bed with me, and the touch of him cold as ice. I remember seeing him there by the flashes, sitting bolt up and his eyes staring open. And every time it come he'd beg me to look—look all around—look. Look at what? Couldn't say. Only *look!* "D'ye see anything, John? Not anything 't all?"

He made me feel queer enough, I can tell you, with that high-pitched, unnatural voice. I use to ask him why he didn't shove his head under the covers, then nothing could hurt him, but he wouldn't hark. Once I tried to drag him down, and maybe you won't believe it of Lester, but, you know, he was wiry as a cat.

Well, one time he told me. It was a Sunday afternoon, and

we was lying on the beach looking at the clouds. Once in a long while it come like that. It's hard to explain. I don't know's you'd understand anyway; you never was born twin with another. But sometimes, when everything was dead quiet and nobody else about and nothing to do, a funny kind of a dreamy softness-like use to come over us; it was 's if all I want to do was to take hold of Lester's hand and lay there and kind o' forget. And if I had a secret, or if Lester had a secret—did you ever see the mist coming off the ground of an early morning—that easy? Oh, doggone it, I don't know how to—it just sounds foolish. But anyway——

Well, anyway, Lester told me why he was scared of lightning. It wasn't he was scared of being struck. No, he says he even wish sometimes he could be. It was something else. As far as he could make out it must've been some dream he'd had, several times, he thought likely. He was in the dark, trying to go somewheres, creeping on his hands and knees. There come a stroke of lightning that run right down through his body like an ice-cold flame. And just then, right before him on the ground, he seen the face of a woman. He seen her there where he could've touched her with his hand, and her eyes was wide open, staring at him—dead—dead as a doornail.

That was what he seen. That was what he was scared he was going to see again every time the lightning come at night. There wasn't no reasoning himself out of it; when he set there in the dark waiting for the next flash it seem to him as sure as death he was going to see the face of that corpse this time—on the bed—the floor—the ground—water—wherever it was he happen to be.

He wasn't himself; you'll just have to understand that. Maybe it's the electricity in the air. Maybe it's something else. I've read something in a book since I was here, and I've got to thinking maybe 'twas something come down to him—something our ma might possibly have got scared by before me and Lester was born. That happens.

But in that case, you'll say, why wasn't I burned with the same iron? Well, there you are. I been reading, and all that business is queer enough, if you only knew it. You can only say that when me and Lester divided up, that was one of the things that went into his share. And what a share! Dear me!

I know I felt different about him in tempests after that,

when I knew. You would, too, if you could've seen the look in his eyes once. No, he wasn't Lester. He wasn't responsible. Anybody that could say he was responsible would be a fool.

When he come running to me in the tempest that evening—you know the evening I mean—and tell me what had happened (what he *thought* had happened), it seemed to me the world had ended for us two. I don't need to go over it again, that "crime" of Lester's. You know it as well's I do; you know's well's I do he wasn't a responsible creature that night, and as far as I'm concerned that's enough.

But he was like a kid, too horror-struck and remorseful to do for himself. He was pitiful. I told him I'd take care of him. We had a good house and a nice piece of land, remember? I locked the house and hove the key away; I remember it shining now in the light where the moon come through the cloud, going over into the long grass behind of White's. Everything I had in the world but my brother went with that key.

I told Lester to come, and we started down across the bog toward the "Y." We was unlucky, though. We met Ellis—Constable Ellis. He squinted at us, and you could see the old man didn't know what to do. When we'd passed him, he turned and commence to follow. We run. Lester was crying, he was so nervous, and I was at my wit's end, I tell you that.

The freight was at the "Y," same's I thought, but seeing Ellis was on our trail we didn't stop. We walked and we run all the way to the Junction that night, getting there about four in the morning. It was still quite dark, and we had no trouble stowing away in an empty box car.

That box car landed us in the hills here after two days and nights (and thank God it wasn't more) without a drop of water or a grain of food. Lester seem to suffer from it. I honestly don't remember a pang of hunger or thirst myself, but it seem's if Lester's would kill me. It seem's if his horror and hopelessness was more'n I could bear, I was that worked up over it all. Even about his "crime." It wasn't his; it was my own; we'd both done it. I tell you it was just the same as it was them times when we lay watching the clouds together; same's if all the time was washed out, back to the time we was unborn babes, and both in the same boat, so to speak.

Well, the first thing we done when we got clear of that box

car was walk into a strange mountain town and buy dinner at a bakery. We set at a table in the rear, eating buns and drinking coffee, one cup after another. We looked bad enough, I guess, with our faces pinched up white and a three days' growth on 'em, and our clothes dusty and bagged. It was hot in that bakery; there was a swarm of flies on everything, and the milk in the coffee was turned a mite, but I tell you, what with the food, the relief, and the newness of all the sights, it was as good as a banquet in the Adams House.

"Now," I says to Lester, "we're all right. Look here. We start from to-day. We was born to-day, Lester, and life's all ahead of us. See?"

A pink spot come in his cheek; he give me a funny look, half scared, half hoping, and his coffee slopped, his hand was shaking so.

"Is that right?" says he. "Honest, do you believe that, John?"

"Sure!" says I as bold as brass. After a minute the pink went out of his cheeks and he give my foot a nudge with his.

"I wish that girl'd quit watching us so," says he under his breath. "She's done nothing else ever since we come in here."

She'd gone from the counter when I got a chance to look. She was back directly, though, and a couple of customers with her—customers, I noticed, that didn't buy. Within five minutes there was a dozen people in that little bakery and if one went out two come in.

Lester begin scratching his wrist. You could always tell when he was getting nervous, the way he always scratched his wrist.

"For pity's sake," says he, "let's pay and get out of here!"

"Don't you mind," says I. All the same it seem to me the place had got as close as an oven. One man come in and give us a long look and walked out at a brisk rate, and I could've swore he had a badge on underneath his coat. Lester wouldn't leave me be.

"John, you don't suppose——"

"It's nothing, nothing," I tell him. I wished I could believe it. The air of them people set me thinking. If Constable Ellis had traced us to the Junction, it was perfectly possible for him to have found out where every car in that freight was billed to. And there's always the telegraph.

"The flies are bad here," I says to Lester. "If you're done we might's well move along." And I call the girl and paid.

"Is that right?" I asked her in a sharp way, for in place of looking at the money she kept her eyes going from one to the other of us, her mouth half open and her face as red as a beet.

"Count it," says I. But she never. And I didn't trouble to ask her again. Just that minute I hear someone coming into the door behind me, and my heart stopped beating. You know the way Ellis walks, from that bad leg of his. Well, it may not've been the least like it, but I never turned to look. I took Lester by the elbow and I says, "Come on quiet," and I walk him straight away through the bake room and out the back door. I never stopped to think; never stopped to reckon out what chance in a thousand there was of old Ellis turning up in the flesh in that little out-of-the-way village in the mountains; no sooner'd we got into the sunlight outside that door than I just started out to run, dragging Lester with me. And I *had* to drag him too.

"No," he keep saying. "Th'ain't no use, John; no use, no use."

"You never mind about the *use*," I kept telling him.

I don't know. There was a fence and a big dump of empty cans, and there was a woman hoeing potatoes in a back yard. She had on a gray-and-white check, and she showed against a line of clothes with one bright-red shirt amongst a lot of white ones. It's funny how that sticks in my mind. The only other thing I remember seeing was a mountain covered with woods, standing up against the sky in front of us, and then all of a sudden a smell of corn growing and a rustle breaking around us like tide-rips. That's where we come, into a field of it, along the foot of the mountain.

"Lay down," I says to Lester when we'd come a dozen rows or so.

"Th'ain't no use," he kept it up, without any life to his voice. "I'm going back and have it over with, John."

"You go back, Lester," says I, "and I'll *kill myself*."

He laid down beside me. The corn was in tassel, big corn that made a high arch over us. The air was warm and damp there between the rows, and as still as still. We lay there saying nothing, just listening. The longer we listened the stiller it grew, till it seem you could almost hear the heart of the earth

itself beating away down deep below. It was like them spells when we laid on the beach together, only stronger, ten times. It was like we was babes again inside the world's green skin, waiting for the time to come when we'd be born, not knowing yet which one of us was to be which.

By and by Lester begin to talk. He laid with his hands behind his head and his eyes staring up at the corn leaves. His whole life come out. He was no good, he says, and he knew it. He had queer ideas and imaginings that scared him, and it wasn't alone in time of tempest any more.

I can hear him going on, monotonous and dreamy, letting it all come out under the green corn rows. He knew he wasn't the same as others, and he couldn't keep his mind off his queerness. He said he had a terrible drawing toward women—not any one woman—just women. Yet he was scared of them. He was scared to be left alone in the dark with a woman or a girl for fear he'd find her dead. That was what seem to get in the way of everything he undertook. So he might's well be dead himself; better, he says, for then he wouldn't be a drag on me no longer, nor a shame nor a torment to himself.

With that I hitch up and put an arm around his shoulders, good and tight, and, "Now it's my turn to talk," says I.

"All this you been telling me is a lie," I says.

"No," says he, "it's every word the truth."

"No," says I, "it's a lie. For it's all just in your mind, and it's wrong. And what's just in your mind, Lester, and wrong, that's a lie. And I won't have it. I won't stand for it, Lester; not in a brother of mine. Now—do you hear what I say? Look here. No, in the eye. I'm stronger'n you, I'm steadier'n you, I'm braver'n you. Not what you say, but what *I* say, is what goes. Get that? Well, it's a lie, and I won't have it. Right here and now I declare war on it, from this identical minute I take sides—with you—and *against* that——lie. I take responsibility for you. What strength I got is yours—*yours*—understand? I give you everything I got, soul and body. There!"

You know, if either of us'd thought of it, I sounded as queer as a loon myself. I was trying so hard to make Lester believe me that I believed myself. I was blowing like a beached haddock when I got through, and so was he.

"You hear what I say?" I give him a hard shake. "I say that that — thing has gone and got out of you—now—*from now on!*"

The same look come into his face that I'd seen in the bakery—hoping, yet scared to hope.

"You—you think so?"

"I don't think so; I know so."

"Honest?"

"Honest!"

Poor Lester! It seem's if I could've killed anybody that undertook to spoil that hope in his face. I seen him roll onto an elbow and turn an ear.

"What's that?" says he in a second.

I was tired—tired to death.

"Nothing," says I. "Nothing but some dog barking somewhere."

"No, but hark!"

Well, I had to listen. By and by it come to me there was more dogs'n one, and that they wasn't barking like farm dogs. They was baying. Same as you'll hear the surf way off on an outside beach; that's how I hear a threshing at the edge of the cornfield, and men's voices.

"Well," I says quiet, "I guess we'll go."

Lester looked at me and I at him, eye for eye. He'd gone deathly white.

"Lester," said I, "you remember what I told you?"

He give me no answer, and when I got up and walked off along the row making toward the mountain side, he followed, stooping same's I did, close behind. The sound of the dogs and men seem to grow louder. It had got hot there under the corn; my tongue was dry and sweat run down into my eyes. And the darkness that come was surprising. I started to run, but Lester had hold of me.

"John!" he beg me. "John, for pity's sake!"

"Be quiet, Lester." I shook off his hand. "You just stick with me and you'll be all right. They won't catch us."

He had hold of me again, nor he wouldn't leave go.

"But—*John!*"

With that I seen what he meant. There come a flash, and then beyond the men and dogs there come another sound

rolling up all along the valley—thunder. That sudden darkness was a tempest cloud.

I had to stop. Even with them dogs coming, I had to take a minute's time. The only thing I could think to do was slap his face. I wish you could've seen the expression that come into his eyes—like relief. Yes, sir, like relief.

"Didn't I tell you," says I, "that I'd taken *that* all onto *me*?"

His look was so funny I had to clap him on the back.

"Lester, you'll live to laugh at all this some day. Now come on."

We come out of the corn and into the free air underneath the trees where the mountain went up. I peeked through the trees and I seen the men coming across the field, just their heads showing, like they was swimming in the corn. All behind 'em across the valley it was dark, what with that cloud and the dusk making.

Night come fast then. We hadn't gone much over a hundred yards, climbing up amongst the roots and moss and stones, before it come on dead blind dark.

Now le'me tell you it was strange and it was awful. It was strange because the rain wouldn't come. I never seen rain hang off so long after thunder, and I tell you I'd a hundred times rather have it pour down buckets than like it was, still as death between the bolts, and hard and dry and airless. And that lightning!

I'd never minded lightning. But I wonder if you ever been under thick woods in a flash of lightning. Well, it's queer enough. All the streaks and shadows take a dart as the light passes over, and you see 'em jump at you.

But what was queerer was Lester. Lester seem to know when they was coming, and he seem to know just where I was, too, for each time, when I seen him, he was standing stock-still with his eyes glued on me. I tell you it was ghostly. For though his face was white, yet there wasn't no more expression on it than you'd find on a stone. And his mouth tight shut.

He made me nervous. I hailed him in one of the flashes.

"Lester," says I, "can't you believe me—it's all right?"

If he changed expression I can't say, for it was dark again,

and if he answered me the thunder drowned it out. Anyhow, for some reason 'r other, I got more and more nervous. I turn and start to walk toward where I'd seen him.

We wasn't climbing just then, but'd come to a small level space, a kind of a pocket-like about ten yards across, set sparsely with these here thin white trunks of quaking asp. I'll see 'em quake in the lightning till the day of my death.

It was funny, but we hadn't heard the dogs for the past three or four minutes. It wasn't that the party had give up, for every now and then we'd see lanterns weaving here and there through the leaves downhill, back and forth like fireflies over a marsh. But the dogs had gone quiet. Perhaps it was the thunder scared 'em. I don't know.

But as I went groping across the glade to try and put a hand on Lester I seen one of them. I'll call that the first flash. It come blind white for a second. It was all over the sky at once, so there wasn't any shadows, just that smooth, staring white. And there, not three yards away from me, stands that dog. He may've been brown, but in the lightning he looked gray, grizzle-gray; a big dog with drooping ears and jowls, perfectly motionless, looking to the right of me. And all around us them pale, thin trees.

Ever believe a man's hair could actually stand on end? Mine did; I know that for a fact. I was so scared of that dog I could've died. And yet I was so set in my ideas that my one thought was, "He's after Lester. Lester's beside me: that dog's seen him; he'll get him." And as the dark come down and the thunder with it I took one long jump at that dog—or at where he had been. Black? By heavens, it was black. And scared? If I'd ever got him, what I'd ever done I don't know.

I never got him. He just'd faded out. And there was I blundering around, stone blind, sweeping my hands every which way and trying to call to Lester to run. Branches hit me, stones give under my feet; I trip on something and down I come with my arms over the trunk of a fallen tree. And then the lightning.

I'll call that the second flash. It was by far the longest of the three; or maybe there was more bolts'n one. If that's so, then the last must've struck close by.

I seen Lester first. He stood about a rod away, looking down at me where I laid with my chest on the log. It couldn't

been a second, but it seemed ten. His face was the same as I'd seen it before; just seem to have nothing in it at all, no colour, no expression. And in his eyes was the strangest look, like a sleepwalker. It was so queer I couldn't face it. I drop my eyes.

There was a flicker of dimness and then a stronger glow than ever; one big cold stroke that lifted the skin away from the flesh and kept it there. And I'll tell you what I seen as I stared down at the ground. From the other side of the tree trunk, from the long, weedy grass that made a kind of shadow under it, I seen a woman looking at me.

I seen that. There's no dream nor anything about it. While that flash lasted that woman looked up at me with wide, egg-shape eyes. Her mouth was open a little, as if with surprise. She had on a gingham dress with a tight little ruffle of white around the throat; her hair was drawn back from the forehead, and her cheeks was a kind of transparent bluish white. I recall every detail. I'll remember it till I die.

It was dark. I got my hands on the log and pushed backward and got onto my feet. Then I turn and walked away. I walked. That's strange. But I remember saying to myself I mustn't on any account try and run. Why? I don't know. It cross my mind that that sight must have done for Lester for good and all; he must be either dead or raving crazy by this time now. For the minute it didn't seem to matter much; though I would've like to've heard his voice. The main thing was to keep from running. And the other main thing was that that lightning must *not* come again.

I'll tell you what. It seem to me if it lightened again I'd just let out one scream and go raving crazy myself. I waited for it. I couldn't wait. I run. That gully was so full of things in the dark I couldn't go two steps without hitting something; trees knocked me, branches cut me, thorns caught me. And all the while it keep hammering in my head, "*It's coming!*"

I begin to call for Lester out loud, caring for neither dogs nor men.

"Lester!" I yelled. "This way!"

I stood still to listen. I wanted to hear his voice. Or anybody's voice at all. It was quiet as the grave. And standing still so, all the strength went out of my knees of a sudden and they doubled under me and I sat down.

Something went through me. Starting with my ankles, something like a cold wind seem to pour up my legs and right away up my spine. And I hadn't the time to say it, "Here she comes!"

It come white. I was sitting on a tree trunk. There was my feet in long, weedy grass. I knew. I couldn't shut my eyes. From right between my feet that woman looked at me with them wide, dead, egg-shape eyes.

And that time the cloud parted and the rain come down.

I don't know how I got away from there, I swear I don't, nor where I went, nor how long a time it was. I only know I was drowned with water and deaf with the roar of it through the leaves. All I know is something hit me on the forehead, a branch, I guess, and down I went without a sense left.

I couldn't've laid there long, yet when I come to again the rain was gone and the sky full of stars. I was in a road. 'Twasn't much of a road, hardly more'n a pair of wheel tracks, but it was clear. I started to walk along it the way I happen to be facing.

In a minute I seen a light ahead of me. I never worried myself what kind of a light it was; I went for that light. When I come up to within a few rods of the doorway that give it, I seen somebody coming toward me. It was my brother Lester.

I couldn't say so much's a word. I stood and waited till he come and looked at me. He give a sigh.

"Thank heavens!" says he. "I was beginning to worry, John. Another ten minutes I should've set out to look for you."

He slap me on the shoulder and laughed. I wouldn't have known him, somehow.

"Hungry?" says he. "I bet a cent you're hungry. You hit the right place, John, old boy, don't worry. There's a woman here fries bacon, and she's got a tub of coffee on the stove. Come along.

"Come along!" says he again, seeing I never moved. I tell you I didn't feel like moving for a cent. I couldn't make him out.

"Didn't you see it?" I manage to say at last.

"See it?" He give a laugh. "I guess I did. Say, some dog! *Some* dog! I thought sure for a minute he was going to get you, John."

"Dog!" says I. "Dog! I don't mean the dog. I mean—didn't you see the face? In the lightning? The face of that—that—that dead woman?"

He look at me for a minute, and it seem to me he was kind of embarrassed. He put his arm around my shoulders and started walking toward the lighted door.

"No," says he in a queer, sober voice. "I never seen it this time, John. And what's the funniest part, I wasn't once scared of being—being just going to see it, either. I been thinking. You know, John, old boy, I almost believe—talking the way you did, and acting like you did—I'll be darned if I believe you didn't cure me."

I couldn't help it; he seem like a stranger. And I as dumb, all the while, as dumb.

"No," says he, "somehow or other I seem to get ahold of myself after what you said—and even more the way you says it. I couldn't help myself—the way you says it—it seem like I had to, and it seem like I did; seem like I just passed the whole fool mess of it right straight over to you. I felt different, anyway.

"Do you know what I was thinking of all through that tempest, John? Well, I was figuring to myself the chance, say, if there was a thousand men out in a thousand different thunder squalls—what chance in a million would there be of any one at all of 'em seeing a dead woman by a stroke of lightning? And here was I, just one single man, out in one single tempest. What chance in a million? In a hundred million? Well, 'twasn't hardly enough, I should say when I come to think of it, to be very badly scared about. Wasn't that right, John?"

He give me a look, kind of sidewise, kind of sheepish, and more colour in his cheeks'n I'd ever seen there before.

"Say!" says he then. He looked at me fairer, seeing I didn't answer. "Say, what's wrong with you? What makes you look that way, John? You hungry?"

"I—yes," says I, "I—I guess so. Hungry."

That minute we got to the doorstep, and out come a woman to stand on the sill, in the light. She's a good-looking, red-cheeked, youngish woman with straight black hair and good-natured eyes.

"Sakes," says she to Lester, "I'm glad you warned me, or

else I'd think I was beginning to see double in my old age." She put her hands on her hips, throw her head back, and give a little laugh. Then says she to me, "You empty too? Soaked on the outside and empty on the in, eh? Well, well, both them things is curable diseases."

Her voice die off and I seen her eyes'd shifted beyond us.

"There they come now," she says.

I look around and I seen a crowd of lanterns coming up the road, and I hear a whining of dogs.

"Land!" I hear her saying, as if to herself. "Just as good I got the coffee early. They telephoned they'd be here like about ten."

You could see she was uneasy, or not so much uneasy as embarrassed. Her eyes shift back to us, and it was at Lester she looked, not me.

"Well?" says she.

"Well?" says Lester, almost like he was mocking her.

I don't know what he'd told her, or who she thought we was, but anyway she was ill at her ease.

"Well," says she, flushing redder and redder and still looking at my brother, "I tell you, why don't you boys just clear out and wait a spell? Right there to the left in the brush you'll find a path leading up the spring. It's quiet there and out of the way. I tell you, frankly, these folks is all right; still, they never been crazy about strangers hereabouts. Specially so as they're all het up just now with this word that Warty Edmond's gang, that held up the mail Tuesday, is working this way over the mountain. If you boys come through town to-day it's a wonder to me they didn't round you up and give you the third degree. They're that het up. Mercy! here they come. That's right. That's best. You just wait above the spring a spell till I call you. I'll give 'em some coffee, and 'twon't be long. That's the boys."

She followed us, though, and come a few steps into the dark. And still it was Lester she looked at, and Lester she spoke to.

"You'll be back, though?"

"Sure, we'll be back," says he, and give her a long look.

"Remember?" says she.

I mistrusted her, somehow. When we come to the spring I was all for playing it safe and going on while we could. I

told Lester I didn't like the look of it: it had too much the look of a trap for me. It was funny; I was the timid one that time, and Lester was the bold.

"No," says he, shaking his head hard. "She's all right."

"All right, or all wrong, I wouldn't take a chance," says I.

"I would," says he. He give me a kind of laugh and a dig in the ribs. "Don't you worry," says he. And for all my arguing he wouldn't budge from that. When the woman called in the dark, I stayed where I was, but Lester went. And he was right.

No, he ain't around here now. He's married now and gone a good ways from these parts, and doing well, I hear; surprising well, for Lester.

Me? Well, maybe some day I'll be setting out on my own again. First I'd kind of like to find that woman. She ought not to be left laying out that way without a Christian burial. And me being the one that seen her, seems like I was the one——

Bayless, darn you! What makes you look——

Darn you, Bayless! Don't you look at me cross-eyed that way. She was *there*. What the name of creation d'you suppose! You suppose I'm another simpleton like Lester, born to see things that ain't? You got another suppose coming, then; that's the joke on you. No, no fooling, Bayless, she was there, and she must be there still, somewhere in them woods across there. See them woods across there? Well, I got to find her, or I don't believe I'll ever get her face out of my mind. Sometimes in a thunder tempest—even now——

CURTAINS

By FISWOODE TARLETON

From *McClure's*, under title *Bloody Ground*. To be included in a volume under the same title, to be published by the Dial Press.

ELECTION day in Leeston and folks trickling into town from the hills to vote and shop. Wagons, mules, and gaunt mountain men and women dot the five roads. Wagons creak down Main Street and dry-land sleds crunch the mud. Mules and oxen plod silently. Mules and lean horses carrying whole families dump them in front of the business stores. Both sides the street is lined with beasts tied to hitchracks. Hogs wallow in their holes and cows roam with their noses turning over rubbish heaps. Some bellow for their calves.

Under the porticos of the business stores men, women, and children make groups. Some stare silently at newcomers who hitch their mules to the racks. Some whisper among themselves. Legs swing over portico floors and eyes stare from under bonnets and wide-brimmed hats. Some hillmen and hillwomen sit under the big elms in the courthouse yard. Men lie flat and women lean their backs against tree trunks. Men whittle or whisper. Women nurse their least ones. Boys and girls wander around the grove wide eyed; timid-eyed children play mechanically. Games stop while the players watch other children slide off mules in front of the porticos.

Hillmen gather on the board walk in front of the restaurant and move from mule to mule, from horse to horse. Ox to ox. Hill traders with more cunning than a gipsy feel over the live stock, look into beasts' mouths. Unhurried men with expressionless faces make terms in low voices, trade or buy without animation. Traders mount horses and mules, race them, whip them to a gallop up and down Main Street. Mud flies and hoofs pound.

Trade in the business stores is brisk. In the general store old man Steele hustles from counter to counter. Hillmen sit on

counters, eat canned peaches and crackers, or drink pink soda water from bottles. Women stand still in one place until old man Steele or his clerk notices them. Children poke around in boxes. Some of the hillmen who sit on the counters talk politics in low voices; some are silent but watch all newcomers entering the general store.

Steve Dodie, the town marshal, leans against the casement of the general store. The star on his shirt glitters, and the butt of his forty-five gun taps the wall as he shifts his body. His eyes systematically look over hill folks as they ride or walk into town. Systematically his eyes sweep the loungers under the porticos and the forms in the picnic grove below the business stores. Pretty soon he grows restless. For several hundred people in town, it's too quiet. Too quiet for election day. Men and women seem to be getting restless. They shift their bodies. Some stretch. Some wander from store to store.

Down in the picnic grove under the canopy of spreading elms hill folks are heating fothched-in victuals over wood fires. Beyond the picnic grove, where Meddlesome Creek bends into town, hillmen are shooting rats. Hog rifles roar and Mausers crack. Men and boys sit on the banks of Meddlesome, hit rats square, and watch them pass with the waters, kicking.

Men linger in the dark hallway of the courthouse after voting. Throw suspicious eyes around. New voters enter slowly and scrutinize those who loaf in the hallway as they pass into the county clerk's office to cast their ballots. In the voting place the judges and clerks sit at long pine tables, fix their eyes on those who enter. Alert eyes fly to the door. Hard eyes scrutinize. Sometimes hands creep nearer the butts of pistol-guns on the table. A deputy sheriff sits in the corner holding a carbine. He rises leisurely, steps over to a voter and searches him. Finds a gun, marches his prisoner to a cell at the end of the long hallway.

Tension everywhere. Because everybody's concerned in some way. Everybody's related in some way to somebody up for election. Men and women shut their mouths tight and watch—watch for moves, watch for firearms, tucked away in jean pants, calico shirts, or wagons.

Women sit on the stairway that leads to the courtroom upstairs. Some chew snuff. Some smoke pipes; spit into boxes

of sand. New arrivals look in the big double doorway and enter timidly. Some carry saddlebags stuffed with groceries. Some look in the tax collector's office a long time before they enter. When they stand before the table of the tax collector they push their tax bills across to him. The business is done without talk. Mostly pantomime. The shoving forward of the bill to the collector, then the money. The wetting of the tax collector's thumbs. The turning of the dog-eared pages of the record. The laborious slow scrawl of the letters that make the collector's name.

In the sheriff's office next to the tax collector's Floyd Jett, the county officer, High Sheriff Jett, sits in a hickory-bark chair and cocks his feet on his table-desk. He looks out his office door at those who pass. Hillmen look in at him. Some speak. Some nod. Some scowl.

Tad Daniels, the six-foot-and-a-half mountain woodsman from Pennyroyal settlement, swings through the doorway into the sheriff's office and sits down. He spits into a box of sand and moves his chair up close to Jett's. The sheriff bites the end off a stogie and lights it. Glances out the window down Main Street, out the doorway once, then back at the hillman.

"Quiet e—lection, Floyd," says the Daniels man.

"Huh. Too quiet!"

"Reckon yuh air a-goin' tuh beat-win, Floyd. Cain't see 'at ol' moonshinin' Mark Valentine a-gettin' hit, a-gettin' power I mean. Hit shore air funny business ef we-uns git a high sheriff 'at's a moonshiner. County'll be a shore hot abidin' place I'm a-sayin'. Mark he air tha gunningdest man I ever seed. Kilt a heap o' men. Be no peace fer decent folks ef Mark beat-wins. Reckon he cain't, though. Nope, Mark he hain't a-goin' tuh git hit."

"Can't tell. Can't tell!" says the sheriff. "Strange things happen sometimes." Floyd Jett rises, looks out the window. He takes Tab Daniels by the elbow. They go out together. Pass down the hallway. Pause on the steps leading to the courthouse yard. Both men look up and down Main Street.

"Mark Valentine air a-doin' some right smart struttin'," says Tab Daniels. "Mus' reckon he air high sheriff a'ready. Seed him while ago with Steve Dodie tha Marshal. They shore war confabbin'. Mark a-paradin' roun', talkin' big talk. Huh!"

Faintly the sheriff catches the drift of an argument. Two hillmen squatting on the ground near the steps differ about a killing way back.

"But Cherrie kilt pro'biton man 'at time. Reckon I know," says one.

"Hain't so. War Ned Cherrie kilt gov'ment man in cave."

"Wal, I air a-tellin' yuh I back-fotched Bud Cherrie tuh his woman. Afore he kicked in he say he kilt Federal man."

Sheriff Jett moves down the steps alone, crosses the court-house yard. When he reaches the edge of the board walk he pauses to look up and down Main Street. The talk of two women leaning against an elm reaches his ears. Two of the Shakespeare women from Milk Sick Cove. Old Ruth Shakespeare herself who in her youth used to ride wild horses without a bridle or saddle, who used to snatch off the bridle to whip her horse with. "Hell-jumping" Ruth, who used to leap an eight-rail fence with a bucket of water in each hand, is talking.

"Seven year 'at O'Gowd boy war at hit, larnin' tuh shoot. Jined Jess James tuh larn rifle-gun. An' seven year tuh clock-minute O'Gowd boy come back and killed his uncle who whip-beated him all time."

The county officer pulls away from the talk. Pulls away from the droning of old Ruth Shakespeare who's telling the other woman about a rock fight on Meddlesome when her grandson and one of the Meadows boys settled a dispute with rocks. Jett turns into Fallon's drug store. Men and women are drinking milk shakes and soda pop. There's an argument going on. Hillmen congregated against the medicine chest spit into sand boxes, scratch their chins, shake their heads.

Fallon the druggist calls Jett. Beckons for him to step over.

"Floyd, you recollect' who done in Steve Nodsey? This man said Steve was shot by ol' man Meadows in ninety-four. That's wrong. My pap saw ol' man Meadows call Steve Nodsey in his yard and slash his throat. In ninety-five. Steve was right smart accommodatin' to save ol' man Meadows from coming out on road."

"Don't know," says Jett. "Want stogies."

Fallon pushes a box of stogies over to Jett, who takes a handful, throws down some money and leaves the store.

He leans against an elm by the road, absently watches

two hillboys slide off a gray mule and talk heatedly while one of them ties the mule to a hitching rack.

"Hit war a sight, I'm a-tellin' yuh. Blood spattered mail-order book in my hand. Blood war a-flyin' ever'-whar. Two Sidson men jes' slashed Tate Torkey tuh bits. Right in Penny-rile store. Blood all over letter I war a-fotchin' to my pap."

"Hain't ketched Sidson men yit," said the other boy. "Two years gone an' hain't ketched Sidsons. Reckon we-uns won' see Sidsons anymore."

"Maybe gone tuh Arizony."

"Nebrasky maybe."

The sheriff turns around sharp, faces the hillboys. Their talk is chopped off. They move away quickly, looking back over their shoulders at the county officer, puzzlement on their faces.

"Killings. Nothing but killings!" says Jett to himself. "Can't talk about anything else. Men, women, and children steeped in blood and gore." His eyes sweep the town and come to rest finally on the picnic grove. He sees a mountain boy playing at feud. Sees him hold a hickory stick like a gun. The boy's pointing at some man under the portico of the general store. Killing in his mind. Killing some old enemy of his people.

A hillman steps out from under the general store portico and crosses the street. The boy's hickory stick is trained on him until he disappears into the drug store. The boy is of the Valentine family, and the hillman is a Daniels. Old feud still smouldering. Ten-year-old boy trying to fan blood hate to flame.

Jett sees suddenly that five men of the Valentine family squat on the ground near the boy with the hickory stick. The Valentines, the trouble clan, the most vindictive and powerful family in the county, are holding an assembly. War powwow it looks like to Jett. Trouble anyway. "Election and trouble," thinks the sheriff. "Isn't worth it. Being sheriff isn't worth the trouble. Didn't want to run for office. Why am I doing it?" Echoes of voices come to him, echoes of words said by the better people of the hills and town. Jett agreed to run when folks pointed out that, left to some moonshiner or some easily influenced man, the county would be the bloody

ground always. His, the most isolated of mountain counties, has to be preserved. Leeston, the most isolated of county seats, with no railroads, no telegraph office, no roads but creek beds leading to it, has to be saved.

As Jett looks about the town, sees the powwow going on in the grove, sees men whispering with their heads together under the porticos, he knows that sinister plans are being hatched to discredit him. It's early in the afternoon. Hours yet before the votes are all in. Plenty of time for the lawless Valentines to swing the balance. It will take the votes of the neutrals to elect. As long as Jett has lived in the hills he, no more than any other man, has been able to penetrate the mysteries of the hill mind. Mountain barnyards and lonely coves have been the scenes of deeper intrigue than ever brought about the fall of empires.

Unrest, brooding fears, and brooding hates are felt by the county officer. The town seems to settle to a deeper, more positive quiet. Men are not whispering so much. Only stragglers enter town, mostly hillmen afoot from the roadless, almost inaccessible hinterland. Men who come out only once or twice a year. Men whose faces are curtained with silky beards and whose eyes don't miss a face on Main Street, yet are hidden under their wide-brimmed felt hats.

The sheriff shifts his legs. Relights his stogie. His movement draws eyes. Eyes glance at him, then settle on newcomers or a dog fight in the mud. A sudden realization comes to Jett. A sudden releasing of memories. Memories of other election days. They stand out sharp. Ever since he was a boy election days have brought about a killing—one killing at least, usually more. Shootings on election day have been as regular as speeches on the Fourth of July. As men and women come to Leeston on the Fourth and assemble in the picnic grove to hear the Commonwealth's attorney, the Judge, or old Lawyer Carr deliver orations about George Washington, so they come on election day to see who's going to be killed. A killing is part of getting men into office.

Men, women, and children lined up under the porticos, in the courthouse yard, in the picnic grove, waiting for the show, waiting for the show that's sure to be staged—drama, tragedy that's sure to happen.

"Blood's in their minds," thinks Jett. "Men are thinking

death, thinking war. Hate, the father of war, father of all trouble in the hills, is resting now, is seated in the souls of somebody, seated and waiting. 'What a man thinketh.'"

The sheriff knows what a man thinks all the time will crystallize. Bound to. He's seen it happen too many times. But isn't he standing there thinking and expecting tragedy, too? While he stands there quietly leaning against the elm tree he's waiting for the same thing to happen that happens every election day. He's as sure as the mountaineers that at some unexpected moment a rifle-gun will speak or a knife flash.

The county officer tries to clean his mind of the thought. Forces into his mind the thought that maybe to-day will be an exception. Maybe to-day will pass without trouble. If it does tradition may break down, crumble a little year by year. His thinking so may not bring about heaven and peace in Leeston but he mustn't throw his thoughts on the other side the scale. "Maybe we won't have trouble," he thinks. "Maybe things will be all right."

But way down in him stirs another thought, another belief. He knows that resting in the souls of some of the hillmen who sit quiet and silent under the porticos there are appetites to be reckoned with, appetites as strong as a hungry man's inner call for food. Some of them, maybe only a few, not all, certainly, but some, some like the Valentines gathering in the picnic grove, are hungry for war, starved for trouble. He, the sheriff, might wish all he wants to, but appetites are going to speak.

He looks up Main Street, sees stragglers still walking into town. Sees a lone mule bearing a man, woman, and two children. Mule's loaded from neck to rump. He sees the mule suddenly pulled to a halt. Sees the hillmen afoot suddenly stop and look back. And he hears hoofbeats. The flash of a sorrel horse as he turns in at Five Corners makes the folks under the porticos and in the grove stiffen. Some sit up, some lying on the grass in the courthouse yard rub their eyes and turn their faces around to look.

The beard of the coming man on the sorrel that canters easily now past the courthouse and the rim of his hat pulled way down over his eyes quicken the sheriff's interest. Men

trying to hide under felt hats and beards, if they are strangers, always arouse Jett's suspicions. "A beard that's not silky, a tough beard that's allowed to grow for the first time," is the substance of Jett's first thought.

Keeping his face straight ahead, looking neither to right nor left, the rider passes the business stores and stops his horse at the picnic grove. The sheriff can tell by the expressions on the faces of the men and women under the porticos that they don't know the horseman—at least, they haven't recognized him yet.

Down by the picnic grove the horseman stops his sorrel, dismounts, ties him to an elm tree. Then enters the grove and sits down with the Valentine family. None of the Valentines move, make any sign, say a word. None even look at him. The leisurely and indifferent attitude of the Valentines doesn't fool Jett, though. And since suspicion is aroused in his mind he's ransacking his memory. He feels that he should know the newcomer. To the sheriff the newcomer is a bad omen. A shadow. A sign of trouble. And rising within the county officer is the strange thought that the newcomer is the crystallization of the blood and gore talk that's been going on in the courthouse yard, the grove, and under the porticos. Men, women, and children have been talking about killings: they've been expecting killings. And as if it were made to order, as if the wishing brought it, as if the obsession of the election-day crowd crystallized, Jett sees the bearded stranger, the addition to the Valentine circle, as the sign of trouble.

Suddenly he finds Tab Daniels at his side again.

The tall woodcutter from Pennyroyal leans against the other side of the elm tree and looks indifferently toward Five Corners, looks away from the picnic grove. "Know tha hoss-rider, Floyd?"

"Trying to place him," says the sheriff. "Seems like I ought to know him."

"Brant Valentine," whispers Tab Daniels.

"Huh! Brant Valentine. So that's Brant. Don't believe I ever saw him before. Before my time, must be. Been away a long time, hasn't he?"

"Brant air a killer."

"Murder on his head?"

"Three-four, I reckon. Brant he kilt ol' man Pelton an' his boy. Kilt pro'biton man, too. While Federal man war a-goin' down mountain Brant he kilt him. Never ketched Brant kase he went West. Heerd he held up steam train in Arizony. Arizony sheriffs ketched Brant. Sent Brant up. Been fifteen-sixteen year sence Brant war hyar. Afore yore time, Floyd."

"Heard a song about Brant and the steam train the other day," said Jett. "Heard it several times. Other day when we went up to Porky to raid still everybody we met was singing that song. All the Valentines were singing it. The song should have tipped me off to something. Funny I didn't think of something then."

"Meanin' what, Floyd?"

"Well, if I'd have thought, I'd expected Brant. No difference though. I expected somebody. Funny I never thought of Brant!" Jett looks abstractedly across the road.

Tab Daniels's eyes turn toward the picnic grove. He sees the Valentine boy training his stick on the sheriff and himself. The youngest of the Porky Ridge feudists is reacting to the conspiracy talk of his people gathered near his feet, carrying out their talk, making a pantomime of killing.

"Look yander, Floyd. Picnic grove!"

When Jett turns his head to look he sees the boy suddenly tripped by one of his uncles, sent sprawling, and smacked in the face by another of his kin as he rises. The boy betraying their plot receives cuffs all around.

The sheriff sees that some of the folks in the grove, under the porticos and in the courthouse yard, have seen the signs, have read them. Some of the men and women begin to fidget. Some rise, stretch, and walk leisurely up toward Five Corners, sit down on the edge of a field.

Jett looks at his watch. It's three o'clock. Four hours yet until the voting closes. Probably not half the votes in. Hill-men come to town on election day not only to vote but to shop, see things, talk. They're never in a hurry to vote. Some wait for a chance to slip into the voting place in the courthouse after the field is cleared of enemies. Some want to argue politics first. Some wait for other members of their families, wait for cousins and uncles, wait for third and fourth cousins, prefer going in to vote with their full strength.

"Air a-goin' tuh be trouble, Floyd," says Tab Daniels.

"Brant's the cat's paw," says Jett. "Maybe he's been hidden in the hills for months. Brought out to-day to help force his brother Mark into office."

"Thar's Mark now," says Tab Daniels. "Jes' come out harness shop."

Jett looks down Main Street again and sees his opponent for election stop on the board walk and talk to a group of horse traders who gather around a team of sleek, fat mules. He sees that he's talking about mules, feeling mules over. The sheriff's eyes once more fly to the grove. The Valentines are not whispering any more. All look up Main Street. When Jett's eyes look up and down the street he sees that everybody under the porticos has eyes on him. Everybody knows he's got to act. The long spell of whispering in the grove has become a defiance.

Suddenly from across the street, from under the shadowed bank portico singing comes. A Valentine boy, fourth in line from Mark Valentine, the moonshiner, and his killer brother Brant, lets out his voice:

"What air yuh a-waitin' fer, Brant Valentine?"

'I air a-waitin' fer steam train a-tearin' tha night.'

'O what yuh a-goin' ter do, Brant Valentine?'

'Air a-goin' through train like hell in sight.'

"Hain't tha law a-goin' git yuh, Brant Valentine?"

'Hain't afeared o' varmints er men, little er big.'

'What steam train a-goin' tuh give yuh, Brant Valentine?'

'Give me bags o' gold fer my Arizony gal's rig.'

Sheriff Jett bites off the end of his stogie. "Riding high," he says to himself. "Heroics. Hero worship. Wanted for murder. Yellow hide at liberty. Yellow as hell. Know he's yellow. All bad men, all killers are yellow. Got to arrest him, of course. Right away. He's got to be jugged and tried, but he ought to be wiped out. More of this business than putting him behind bars. Problem's to get him there and keep him there without adding any glory to his mean hide. Huh. A ballad sung to a skunk!"

Jett's mind dwells for a minute on the old habit of song making in his hills, in his, the "singindest" county, where

the flight of Lindbergh is kept alive with song. Where the horrors of the *Titanic* are preserved in ballads made when the first news trickled into the hills. Where dark as well as uplifting deeds find records in song. Genius for ballads unweakened by time. King Alfred to the present, minstrelsy kept alive. History recorded in song! A man doesn't have to read to know the drama local and world-wide, from Chaucer's time on down. A page from Chaucer in every stark hill! Full understanding is in Jett's mind. Full appreciation of his ticklish job. When he goes after Brant his kin will rise to a man. And Jett's kin will rise to a man. Then only the militia can settle things. Settle Jett, too. State troops always give a black eye to a peace officer in the hills. Show weakness.

If he, Jett, calls for the militia to ride into town and take charge, station itself on the street, in the grove, in the courthouse; if he, Jett, surrenders to the militia and lets the troopers, "fotched-in men," preserve order at the voting place and tell hillmen what to do and what not to do, the neutrals are going to resent it.

"Somebody's going to be killed," says Jett to himself. "Sure as the Romans were way back that a victim would spill his blood in the arena, somebody's going to be killed in this town."

Not much difference between the moods of the dandies of Cæsar's time and some of Jett's own countrymen from the dark coves and wooded hillsides. The street lined up with folks reminds him of an amphitheatre filled with a bloodthirsty audience.

A horse tied to the rack in front of the harness shop squeals and plunges. Breaks his hitch strap. Gallops down the mud road squealing. Men laugh and watch him. Some leave the porticos and stand by the heads of their mules or horses. Two hillwomen mount their mules and sit. Down by the restaurant two young hillmen approach a bony horse, a sway-back old plug. They pour something on his rump that seems to lift him up in the air. Old plug horse rears, jerks backward, kicks and breaks the paling off the hitch rack. His stiff legs stumble when he tries to gallop. The paling lashes the ground, whips the mud as his head swings it on the end of the hitch rein. "High life," that liquid fire that sears and maddens, that hell-burning that gives a few minutes of renewed youth to the

oldest of beasts, is starting horses and mules up and down the line. Men dash from under porticos after their beasts. A hillman grabs one of the "high life" throwers and tosses him into the mud, then starts after his disappearing mule.

The county officer walks down the board walk to the restaurant. He grabs two young hillmen by the shoulders who are leaning against the hitching rack. Searches them. Finds two bottles and dumps the contents on the road. Then he marches them to the courthouse. They are sullen and purse their lips as he puts them into a cage at the end of the courthouse hall. Voters and loungers in the hallway lean against the walls in the hallway and whisper. Voting stops in the county clerk's office. Election officials and voters appear in the doorway of the office and peer down the dark hallway.

The squeal of a horse and the pounding of hoofs come from outside. Jett on the run reaches the front door in time to see his white horse tear across the courthouse yard and down the road toward Five Corners, swinging a broken halter strap. Somebody's been in the stable and touched his horse with "fire." Somebody's turned a pure-bred Blue Grass horse into a maddened beast that will run until it drops. Jett's lips close tight and his face grows livid as his eyes survey the folks in the courthouse yard. Everybody's sitting still. Everybody's quiet. Men continue to whittle. Women nurse their young or knit "kivers" with their backs against the tree trunks. All eyes are on Jett.

A young hillman walks leisurely across the yard, whistling and whittling. He looks back over his shoulder two or three times. Jett has a hunch. It's weak at first, but as he watches the faces of folks it grows stronger. Everybody's looking from the young hillman to Jett now. Looking back and forth. Two women whisper and look first at the young hillman, then at Jett. Jett sees the signs and reads. He cuts across the yard after the whistling hillman, who increases his pace. Keeps ahead of Jett, not by swinging his legs faster but by taking up more ground with each step. When they reach the business stores both men are almost running. The hillman suddenly slips in between a team of mules, disappears for an instant; then the sheriff sees him running for the grove.

Jett sees the Valentines rise in the grove. Sees Brant whispering to them all. Brant's arms are folded. His right hand is

inside his coat. "Gun in his shoulder holster," says Jett to himself. The sheriff keeps on going toward the grove, his thumbs hooked in his belt.

The tension's tight under the porticos. Everybody but the Valentines leaves the grove. Mountain men and women and their young leave their victuals to burn over the wood fires and move back to the deep timber. The crowd under the porticos thins out fast. Folks hustle into business stores. Some go into the bank and look out the long window with the cashier. Some climb the stairway to the *Argus* printing office. Hillmen untie their mules and lead them up to Five Corners. Windows up and down the street frame faces, and doorways are filled with mountain and town men who stick out only heads.

And Jett keeps going, keeps straight for the grove, his thumbs hooked in his belt. He's only fifteen seconds in crossing the road, but a lot of things are observed by him during this time. The forbidding grove, twelve dark-expressed men eyeing him. The lips of Brant Valentine, Bad Brant, move in whispers. Ned Shakespeare, first cousin to Brant, first cousin to Mark Valentine who's running against Jett for election, Ned who's been in prison twice for moonshining, is whispering and nodding to Brant. The sheriff sees the faces way back on the hillside beyond the grove looking over the tops of the tight laurel. The sorrel horse of Brant Valentine champs his bit, the sheriff's boots make a sucking sound as he lifts them from the mud. Nothing else is audible as Jett crosses the road.

"Somebody's going to be killed in this town," says the sheriff to himself as he reaches the grove. "Going to be bodies laid down here. It's in the air, in souls."

When he reaches Brant Valentine he grabs his right arm quickly. It comes forth empty. A few seconds tick off while the county officer and the bad man eye each other. He sees Brant's eyes rise, close, then open again. Double wink. Signal. Jett reaches inside Brant's coat with his right hand, reaches for the gun carried Western fashion.

A yell comes, loud yell from somewhere under the porticos, warning yell, yell from a friend, peculiar note in it that makes Jett turn his head.

A curtain seems to drop in front of Jett's eyes, black cur-

tain but hot black curtain that burns, that sags into his eyes and sears, makes him throw his hands to his eyes to push the curtain away. He hears a report, and his left leg loses its feeling. Only one leg to support him—and the strange curtain that's hot and doesn't glow, that shuts out everything. He can't stand on one leg, got to go down. He feels the ground but he seems to keep going down. Way down into a pit, going slow but going down. He hears gunfire, shouts, yells. An uproar above him where it's light. Where the world is, above the sod, there is war. Pretty soon others will lay their bodies down. Pretty soon he'll have company going down.

"Nothing to see. Nothing! Maybe something to feel," thinks Jett. His hands feel around slowly. Glide over something soft—covers. His fingers step up his chest, to his face, to the place where his eyes should be. Still a curtain. This time a curtain he can feel.

"Don't, Floyd! Lie still. Can't take it off yet." Woman's voice says it—his woman. "Be all right by an' by."

"What happened?" he asks feebly. "Who-all was killed in 'his town?"

"Mustn't talk, must lie still, Floyd."

The slow stepping of a mule comes from the street.

"Must be night," says the sheriff.

"Yes, it's night," says the voice of his woman. "See if you can't sleep."

A voice suddenly rises in song; hillman going home. Hillman singing and mule stepping through the mud.

"High Sheriff Jett braved twelve bad men,
Jett afeared o' nothin' we-uns could see.
Stood alone like Daniel in ol' lions' den,
Faced Killer Brant purty as yuh please.

"'High life' flung in Sheriff's eyes,
Sheriff as blind as bats kin be.
Oh, what did Brant do when Sheriff cain't see?
I air a-tellin' yuh all, lissen tuh me.

"Brant war yaller, big yaller streak
Made him shoot Sheriff blind as a bat.
Oh, what did men do a-hidin' in street
When they seed High Sheriff shot by a rat?

"Guns an' knives come out o' wagons an' sleds
Sod began a-runnin' with blood an' gore.
Men fotched Sheriff tuh home an' bed,
An' men fotched rope from gen'al store.

"Mob kilt Brant's kin 'at didn't flee,
Ketched Bad Brant, hung him to a limb;
Pulled him up quick on a big elm tree,
Then went tuh co'tehouse an' voted Jett in.

"Bad Brant's body air a-swingin' from tree,
Body up high an' soul gone down.
Hit's a blacky night but Lord kin see;
Lord fotched kiver fer bloody groun'."

PROHIBITION

BY GLENWAY WESCOTT

From Harper's

OLD RILEY lay, without hands or feet, on a red tapestry couch in the dirty sitting room and blinked happily at the sunshine and at a bottle which stood in it beside him. An exceptionally hairy white dog crouched under his outstretched arm. All around him there were geraniums and begonias in rusty tin pails on dry-goods boxes. Through the window one could see little slatternly groves here and there, and a hill hollowed out on one side by a gravel pit like a great empty grave. Though no one asked him to, Old Riley sang a song. A child, standing as near the door as he could without being asked where he was going, stared reverently at the little drunkard, now crippled and famous and apparently happier than ever before.

Though the temperance movement had gained strength in that part of the country long before drink was prohibited by law, Old Riley was not the only notorious drunkard in the township. There was a farmer named Theodore Osten who was said to have broken off a bull's horns with his bare hands. He often pounded on the district schoolhouse door in the afternoon, demanded as many of his six children as were there, and took them whimpering home with him. Once he came back from the village with a butcher's knife in his hand. His wife escaped through the back yard, leaving her sixth baby behind. When she brought a crowd of the neighbours to rescue the child, he stuck somebody's hired man in the leg and, bursting into gloomy laughter, threw the knife at them all. But his wife would not be separated from him or let the neighbours have him sent to jail, and complained bitterly about the fines he was obliged to pay.

There was also the sickly old bachelor, Charlie Fox, who

got drunk only in bad weather. He began to complain whenever clouds came up, but after five or six bottles of beer ceased to mind the elements. He would wander up and down in the worst blizzards, murmuring to anyone he met, "Hell of a storm we're having—suits me!" Or he would sit down in the mud outside a saloon window, his arms folded, his eyes shut, the rain streaming over his cheeks and under his wet wing collar, the lamplight shining on his white, serene, weak face.

Even before the accident which had confined him to his bed Old Riley had never been melancholy or dangerous. At his very worst he amused himself by letting young cattle out of pasture, by pushing over shocks of grain, chicken coops, and beehives until he got tired. In spite of his practical jokes and his bad example to the young, the sober, God-fearing farmers and their wives could not hate him; neither could they pity him at any time. The mingling of joy and catastrophe in his life confused even the most opinionated among them. They regarded him as something less than a man, an irresponsible animal in human form.

To their children, on the other hand, he always seemed more than human, and began to charm and frighten them even before he came into sight. Through the harvest fields at dusk they would hear a song coming toward them as if it were stumbling over the fields without a singer. Out of hollows or from the far side of hills there would come the revolving thunder of his lumber-wagon wheels, the hiss and crack of the whip which he flourished like a long leather snake, and strangely melodious shouts—the shouts of a hunter or a jockey, the cries of a drunken hunter or a jockey on a wild horse. "Holy this" or "Holy that," he cried—this or that being one of those short words which mean more in sound to children than in sense to their elders. Children never had the courage to inquire about anything he did or said.

Dissipated happiness and a tragic accident. . . . His happiness, while it lasted, was injurious to others and furnished the community with a token of its inner desperation, the inarticulate fields and farmhouses with an appalling voice. Disaster, when it overtook him, made him a symbol of every abnormal delight, of the durability of character, of contentment with catastrophe, and saved his family from the con-

sequences of his pleasures. Roistering joy on summer afternoons and evenings, a terrible event among deep snowdrifts, in the starlight. . . . It is no wonder that the neighbours made no attempt to explain the meaning of Old Riley's story to their children, for a tragedy was its happy ending.

He usually went to a saloon in one of the adjacent villages about four o'clock in the afternoon. Sawing on the mouths of his nervous mares, he brought them to a standstill, clambered down from the high seat, gathered some flowers along the fence, tearing them up by the root, pinned them to the lid of his lamentable greasy cap with a nail, clambered back up, and started his team again with a good deal of shouting.

Some children on their way home from school, undaunted by his curses and his wild driving, climbed into the back of the lumber wagon. Old Riley turned about and shouted, "Open yer mouths and shut yer eyes," and amused himself greatly by dropping pennies, nickels, and dimes into their mouths with one hand, cracking the whip over their heads with the other. When he missed his aim one youngster or another dropped to the ground instantaneously, like a little warrior picked off a vehicle by a sharpshooter, to spend the rest of the afternoon hunting the coins in the dust and gravel and among the nettles by the side of the road.

A few hours later, drunk enough and ready to go home, his pockets were empty. "I must 'a' gave it all to the brats on the way," he explained to the bartender. "What a blasted fool I am! Now, wouldn't ye know I'd do that? Ye know me anyway, Bill."

The bartender did know him: the next day or the day after he would deny his indebtedness; but his boys also knew their father and could be made to pay what was due—secretly, lest he give them a beating.

In his boyhood the eldest son, who was called Young Riley, had indeed followed his father into saloons in hope of getting him home sober. During this period the incorrigible man lost less of his money and did somewhat less damage to other people's property, but otherwise the youngster's presence put no restraint on him. And he was fonder of his boys than of other men and liked to drink with them; so little by little, Young Riley, and eventually the other son, Terrie, adopted the old man's ways. But Young Riley had some principles,

and would not leave the farm in the afternoon or permit his brother to do so; together they pretended to do the work in the fields which their father optimistically neglected.

All alone, therefore, in the early evening, Old Riley started home, too drunk to care when he arrived. He saw the open gate of a neighbour's barnyard and swung through it, shouting and flourishing his black-snake whip. He tied the team to a heavy pig trough, but they pulled it along the ground until they could eat from a haystack.

As he entered the warm stable where men were milking, boys and little girls throwing down corn fodder and feeding the calves, Old Riley swayed and bowed ceremoniously. In his hand he was carrying a length of wild grapevine in blossom, and he knotted it under his chin like a necktie. "Gad," he said, "wild grapes smell like a snake."

A small boy who heard him say this spent much of his time in hunting the delicate brilliant grass snakes, and resolved to kill another to-morrow to find out how it smelled.

Then Old Riley sat down on a milkstool and gave an account of what had happened to him lately, boasting and putting on airs, and reciting in conclusion a long list of curse words, softly, rather mechanically, like a priest telling his beads. He nodded his head as old hens do when they have a certain sickness and kept on shaking his fist in the air while his tired body sagged lower and lower, lurching a little from side to side. He fell off the milk stool; and there at last he lay, on a pile of clean straw for bedding the animals, taking a short nap, the one belligerent arm still raised above him.

The farmer and his young hired men, laughing uneasily, went on with their work. They also might have taken to drink; this was the moral lesson of the ridiculous. The youngsters were enchanted, as if the old fellow were a small dancing bear or the monkey of an invisible organ grinder whose music only they could hear; and they gazed at him with starry, disgusted, incredulous eyes—the admirable eyes of children born and bred in the country.

He was tolerated thus in the evening in the barns even of his most self-respecting neighbours because, when all was said and done, he did no harm. Not, at least, to anyone but his own flesh and blood, wife and children, and that was the sort of harm which seemed appropriate to them, or which they

deserved. The worst gossips in the community said, "They're all kind o' heartless, those Rileys. Heaven knows what could happen to make such as them unhappy"; and their faces lighted up as if they had discovered a recipe for simplifying life; some people have no hearts to break. . . . Perhaps they found Old Riley sympathetic because he had as little patience with human disappointments as they.

So when he had rested and cheered himself by the seeming benevolence of some neighbour or another, he would set out again, disputing with himself as he untied his horses whether he was hungrier than he was thirsty; his thirst was never altogether quenched, but it was always hunger which brought him home. He remembered that he had forgotten the groceries he had promised his wife to buy, and the money she had given him was gone. She would upbraid him; he would probably have to beat her to put her in the wrong.

May Riley was a pleasant, shiftless woman who had been frightened for so many years that she had begun to seem a little weak in her mind. People believed that he did not actually hurt her; at any rate, she hid her face in her skirts without crying out, and never whimpered or showed any bruises after it was over. But she gave her entire time to shivering anticipation of his next drunken return from the village, and so neglected her housework, cooked badly, and wore her dresses, petticoats, and shawls in mere tatters wound around her loose-jointed body. Sometimes it was because she cooked badly that he abused her, or because she was not as pretty as she had been on their wedding day.

In those days, years before, she had looked like their daughter Angeline. Her brothers called her Candy on account of her hair, which hung in curls the colour of taffy all around her pretty, pale face.

Driving home through the bland summer evening Old Riley meditated on the weather or the landscape or the poor farms he passed. The weather was an entertainment, the landscape never seemed tedious, the farmhouses never mean and melancholy—because he was always drunk. Alcohol saved him from the mediocrity of the world.

His younger son, Terence or Terrie, the lovable Riley, was like him in this respect. He also drank for fun, and being drunk was an enchantment; then even the banal saloons, the

poor farmers' women with dirty hair and sagging bodies who knew only too well how to take care of themselves, the lonely sheds and stables took on a bright and distorted appearance. But, unlike his father, he could not be drunk all the time. His brother, for the pleasure of governing him, allowed him little money to spend, little time to make love to such women as there were; and he dreamed of a life which would have that shining, deformed appearance even in broad daylight when he was sober. He wanted to join the navy, talking to others and even to himself about the places where the battleship would probably stop—the shore of the sea covered with odd buildings, the hundreds of sailors as good as but no better than he, the welcoming women crying out and agitating their shawls. . . . What a wild life he would lead in those places, buying what he liked, fed and clothed like a child by the government! He thought it would be the most agreeable thing in the world, and perhaps he was not wrong.

Driving home, sitting up very straight and gesturing with the whip or the long reins as if the road were lined with people with their eyes fixed on him, Old Riley thought of a quarrel he had been engaged in. A great anger arose in his heart and, forgetting the quarrel in the storm of his emotion, he searched his mind for another pretext, an object or person upon whom it might be spent. If his sons were arguing about the navy when he got home, he would thrash them and they would see.

For Young Riley would not let his brother enlist, indeed, threatened to kill him if he did—perhaps out of jealous affection, perhaps in dread of the tedium of his own experience if he were left alone. Nor would he go away with the boy, somehow unwilling to leave the scene of an honest, laborious life, though not leading it or likely to. He was ashamed of keeping Terrie back, but as long as he suffered from alcoholic stomach trouble he could make no sacrifices; blamed everything, including his own selfishness, on their father; and turned for forgetfulness to the very cup which he wanted to forget. Then, drunk or sober, his anger arose and confused him about everything.

It wore itself out like any other forbidden passion, and was succeeded by a heavy anxiety and a sense of guilt. He had no right to blame his father and brother; he was equally good for nothing; but he had too much common sense to be so

cheerful about the results of their dissipation. The farm had been mortgaged twice; no one knew what would happen to the old people if it came to a foreclosure; and Young Riley, especially in the early morning after a night's drinking, thought desperately about the future.

Old Riley did not. Driving home he brooded upon a stupendous lie that he was preparing to tell, a song that he might sing or was singing. Though to his regret he had no bottle in his pocket, he seemed to be getting more and more drunk and was not sure that he knew his way home; it did not matter, his horses knew. And in a vague way he foresaw that he would be surprised to find his wife and children in the house that could scarcely be called his home, though he had been born in it, and looked forward with vague pleasure to falling upon them in instantaneous fury and chasing one or another outdoors or indoors, and spoiling all their plans.

In and about that house there was an atmosphere of slatternly grace and peace until he came. Neglect had contributed to the ordinary building and the barn and sheds its ramshackle beauty, the great comfort of idle men. The gables were sway-backed, the weathervane twisted; the barn doors hung from one hinge apiece; the half-wild fowls had learned to fly up on the rotten branches; and two or three sheep that were left of a large flock lay at the doorstep with the dogs. The moon was coming up and filled the yard with liquid brightness and clean shadows tossed about by the weeds and the grass. All about stood slim poplars whose little branches hung down in rows of curls as perfect as Angeline's. The soft moon rose higher, stirred up new odours, warmed the dew. The balm, the dust, the summer, drifting down, clouded the faces of May Riley and her children.

The old woman crouched on the doorstep, asleep, with her fists full of goose feathers she was sorting to put in a pillow. A little way away, on a dry-goods box, her sons sat close together, with a whisky bottle on the ground within reach. They had a large accordion which each played in turn, the other singing, or even, with a good deal of laughter, both playing at once—one large ruddy hand fingering the keys, one manipulating the bellows out of which some of the air escaped with a sigh.

Angeline was hiding in the haymow with her beau. It had always been the same one, a young man named Andie Roy. He had been going with her less of late, or seemed, at least, to be less serious in his intentions. Angeline blamed her father and brothers and determined to have him, in spite of their bad reputation, in spite of his scruples. They hid in the haymow now because Andie was pretending to be afraid of Young Riley, who knew, of course, that he was there—actually because he was trying to be there without thinking of it himself, having made up his mind not to come.

At a pause in the music the brothers, hearing their whispers and laughter, shook their fists in that direction and winked at each other. Then the throbbing of music ran out again in the blood heat of the air, far out, their unskilled, heavy, palpitating voices joining it now and then. Over the drowsy countryside these sounds troubled young girls lying ill at ease, and reawakened the ambitions, the shames and grievances, the homesickness for places unseen, of boys more finely bred than the Rileys, and set overworked mothers weeping for dead children. But in the Irish yard there was no sadness in the music nor in anything else: Terrie had forgotten the navy for the moment; his brother had forgotten the mortgages, was neither drunk nor sober, and did not care; the mother was asleep; Angeline was in her young man's arms; and they all enjoyed the music and the time of night as if there were no past or future.

Then the lumber wagon rolled into the yard. Old Riley clambered down, threw the reins on the ground, shouted a few curses, picked up a good-sized stick, and strode into the midst of his family. He made a lunge at the boys with the stick. They took refuge in the wagon shed, knowing that their father, in his condition, would not be able to find his way in the dark among the wheels and thills and harness lying about. The accordion sank to the ground and cried one hopeless note like a dying swan's as the breath went out of it and it collapsed. The whisky bottle tipped over, the whisky gurgled out—the dry earth drank it up.

Then the old man turned his attention to his wife, shaking out the bag of goose feathers in her face. She woke in a sort of little winter of its contents, and at first did not know where she was. Just as he was about to strike her for her complaints,

his sons, from the shadow of the house, jumped on his back and tied his hands and feet with some pieces of rope. He roared and his wife wept, and then he began to sing a song. The boys squatted at his feet in menacing attitudes, but they listened to the song, and it was evident that they loved him.

Angeline came out of the barn into the moonlight, rubbing her forehead where the curls caressed it. Terrie shouted, "Where's your beau, Candy?"

"He ain't been here, has he?" she answered craftily. "I been asleep. What's the matter with Pa?"

"You're a liar," the boys said, "but wha' do we care?"

Andie Roy was not there then. At the first of her father's shouts the girl had whispered to him, "You better skip, there's trouble." He had slid down out of the haymow, mistaken a trapdoor for the ladder into the stable, and landed heavily on a pile of hay in the bull's manger. The little old bull, which smelled like a lion, had snuffed him, and he got up and hurried out through the barnyard.

Andie Roy was so much excited and so much in love that he wondered if he were going to die, and there was pain in several parts of his body. So he lay down by the side of the road and, for a while, cried like a small boy, pressing his mouth against the knuckles of his fists. It seemed to be one of the greatest sorrows in the world that night. The night grew more and more fair. The tree over his head dropped now and then a burned or withered leaf. The lovelier the weather the more the boy suffered from his feelings about Angeline, which seemed to lead nowhere.

His widowed mother and the Catholic priest, Father Hoyle, had encouraged his determination not to marry her. Father Hoyle said over and again that Andie was one of the most superior boys in his parish, so he ought not to mix with disobedient riffraff like the Rileys. He was particularly anxious that his young men should not drink, since the Protestants favoured prohibition and made of the excesses of the Irish Catholics both a political and a doctrinal issue. Andie knew that he was inclined to liquor and that Terrie and Young Riley had too much power over him.

During the spring of that year, having loitered in a saloon with those two, he had been going down a lane which led through one corner of a woods. And a voice had said to him,

"Andrew, Andrew—get you!" He had been infinitely moved and frightened, not so much by the sound of the voice which had been no more alarming than that of a tomcat or a hoot owl or anything else one may hear when one has had too much to drink, as by the meaning of what it said in relation to the bad company he had been keeping, his temptations, his mother's grievances.

He had told Father Hoyle about it, and the superstitious old man, not knowing what to believe himself and hoping for a matter-of-fact explanation, had repeated the story to a number of his parishioners. Thereafter when Andie saw the two Rileys, out with girls or in a saloon, they had shouted at him, "Andrew, Andrew—get you!" If they got him he would be as bad as they were. His mother had assured him that if he did not reform their little farm would have to be mortgaged before long, and he would probably beat her, and they would be looked down upon by everybody. So Andie had told Father Hoyle that he meant to give no more thought to Angeline Riley.

The old priest had said, "Now if ye don't mean to marry the girl, keep away from there. I know what you young Irish are. There's the old Nick in yuh."

Andie had tried to keep away, but a sort of fixed idea of Candy's pale yellow curls and her eyes of a melted, diluted blue tempted him back in the evening very often. He had tried to persuade himself that he was getting over it by degrees, but he was not. Instead, his disapproval of her family was wearing away; he was beginning to enjoy their kind of happiness. But for his mother he would not have hesitated to drive the girl into another township and get married before another priest. He did not dare to try to seduce her, and she would not let him go any farther than so far, fearing that he would cease to care for her as soon as he had had his own way. That was a good thing, for he knew that he would care all the more and cared too much as it was.

So as he went back home from her house he shed tears, gnawed at the back of his hand, and even cursed a little.

He stopped his sniffing just in time, for his mother was leaning over the garden fence in the moonlight, and like an echo she began to cry where he had left off. "You don't look at things right. You been off havin' a good time with those wild

Rileys, and little you care whether I've been here cryin' my eyes out or not."

Before he went to bed Andie spent an hour defending the Rileys and trying to prove that he had a right to marry whom-ever he liked, though he realized that there was not a particle of honesty in what he said, for at bottom his mother and he were always of the same opinion. Since he could not free his heart or change his mind, matters went from bad to worse for him the rest of the summer and all fall.

The Rileys also began to look at the seamy side of things. The man who held the mortgages would give them only until spring, and obviously money could not be raised during the winter. May began to fail in health. Terrie told his sister, "I guess Bud is getting funny in his head"; by which he meant that Young Riley was growing infinitely sad and bad tempered. Terrie himself grew more and more sullen about the navy; on one occasion he struck his mother, and his father and brother took turns punishing him. Angeline lost hope of getting Andie to marry her. They all grew older and looked faded. Only Old Riley never changed in appearance or behaviour—he seemed immortal.

The winter set in early, frosting the corn before it was ripe and spoiling good pasture, as if to make sure that they should be unable to meet the mortgage. Old Riley had to begin to sell the pigs and cows, as money was needed for food and drink.

There was a heavy fall of snow just before Christmas, and at that time a special election was held in Belleville. Riley left home with his boys right after the noonday meal, Young Riley and Terrie with the bobsleigh and the team, he himself following alone in the cutter. They always made of any political occasion a carnival of drinking.

Under the sleigh runners the crisp snow made a loud chirruping; the sleigh bells left behind them in the air their flurry of jangling notes. Around the muzzles of the horses and the mouths of the men the breath floated like visible souls about to vanish. Where there had been masses of living flowers, there lay a vast garden of dead-white and blue-white—the wind having twisted the tops of all the snow banks into bloom.

In Belleville the Rileys established themselves at Schimmel's saloon, the one nearest the town hall. The boys began

by playing cards, and earned a good many drinks. The men of the country came in before or after voting; since it was bitterly cold, all drank more than usual for the warmth. Old Riley wedged himself between a barrel and the bar so that he did not have to depend entirely on his legs, and there made eloquent speeches for all the factions in turn, tossing off the rewards of his eloquence.

Smoke, hanging in warm layers, blotted out the eyes or hands or mouths of men on the other side of the room, and mixed in a vague sparkle the shining of varnished wood, glasses, lighted matches. Outside the temperature fell below zero. Men shuddered when it came time to go; the Rileys felt fortunate to be too drunk to have to think of it. They ate some sausages from the bar and let the time pass. At last they were alone in the foul, clouded, warm place amid the débris of refreshment, fatigue, argument; and the barkeeper wanted to go to bed.

So, cursing and stumbling about in their sheepskin coats, they went down to the stables over the crunching snow, over the frosted filth, and through the stiff, echoing cold. The boys were engaged in another argument about the navy and hitched up their horses without paying any attention to the old man, expecting him to follow them with his cutter. But instead he rolled into the back of their bobsleigh and fell asleep there before they drove out of the yard.

There were dazzling stars. The snowdrifts over the land looked like innumerable ghosts lying side by side. Terrie and Young Riley were angry with each other; but after all, it was an arctic night and they were young and warm, so they drew close together under the blankets and ceased to argue.

Behind them their father did not snore, because he was lying face down in the straw, and they did not discover him. The road rose in a hump over every drift that had been blown up; the sleigh lifted on the crest, lurched into the trough of wave after wave of snow.

About halfway home, Old Riley rolled out in the road. Perhaps he did not wake up; at least he was not sufficiently sobered by the fall to shout or to rise and follow his boys on foot.

The next day at dawn the first farmer on that road to go to the cheese factory found him there and brought him home.

The doctor who was called in found it necessary to remove his feet at the ankles and his hands at the wrists.

In due time it became evident that it was a happy ending for them all. His wife was no longer afraid of him and became quite a capable woman. The effort of ministering to his pain until the amputations healed, of clothing and feeding him and giving him drink, roused her from her apathy of years—years of waiting at home to be abused.

Shaken to the bottom of his sluggish heart, Young Riley had no difficulty now in ceasing to drink. He went to a Ladies' Aid supper at the Methodist Church, stole a temperance pledge, signed it without telling anyone, and kept it hidden in his bedroom. Refreshed by disaster, his fleshy face, once inanimate and middle-aged with gloom, lighted up. To all intents and purposes he had inherited the farm and he would make it profitable. The banker who owned the mortgages was persuaded to give them another year to begin paying their debts.

Young Riley was glad to let his brother go away somewhere to make a fresh start in life. So Terrie joined the navy in the spring, and sent home picture postal cards from Villefranche, Cardiff, and Kiel.

Since the Rileys were a changed family, there was nothing to keep Angeline and Andie apart. They were married and were happy in the most ordinary way in the world. In a little less than due time a child was born; they named it after Old Riley, whose given name had been forgotten for years.

The prohibition law was passed. Some of Old Riley's temperance neighbours, greatly elated, wanted to ask him what he thought of that. They found the little mutilated man who had been the terror of the community lying in a bay window, and forgot what they had come for. The room was filled with an atmosphere of patience, indolence, and lawlessness. Sword ferns, begonias, and radiant geraniums stood all about his couch. Over his head one could see out over the countryside, and there was a hill hollowed out like the grave of a giant who has come to life, dug himself up, and wandered away. A child who had come in with the neighbours shrank in terror toward the door, shrank from the little man's air of happiness. For he was drunk, though he had been punished by a divine law against it and though a law on earth had been

passed. His arms came to an end inside his sleeves, his legs inside his tattered trouser legs. He seemed to enjoy the scrutiny due him as an object lesson and not to care what the lesson was. His smiling wife went on giving him whisky, setting the glass with a straw in it on a chair within reach of his mouth.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

THE LISTS

Before consulting the appended lists, please note the following abbreviations:

<i>Ac.</i>	<i>Action Stories</i>
<i>Ad.</i>	<i>Adventure</i>
<i>Am.</i>	<i>American Magazine</i>
<i>Am. H.</i>	<i>American Hebrew Magazine</i>
<i>Am. Merc.</i>	<i>American Mercury</i>
<i>A. A.</i>	<i>Argosy Allstory Magazine</i>
<i>Arch.</i>	<i>Archer</i>
<i>Atl.</i>	<i>Atlantic Monthly</i>
<i>B. M.</i>	<i>Black Mask</i>
<i>B. B.</i>	<i>Blue Book Magazine</i>
<i>Book.</i>	<i>Bookman</i>
<i>C. W.</i>	<i>Catholic World</i>
<i>C.</i>	<i>Century Magazine</i>
<i>Ch.</i>	<i>Children. A Magazine for Parents</i>
<i>C. T.</i>	<i>Chicago Tribune</i>
<i>Clues</i>	<i>Clues Magazine</i>
<i>C. H.</i>	<i>College Humor</i>
<i>C. L.</i>	<i>College Life</i>
<i>Col.</i>	<i>Collier's Weekly</i>
<i>Cow.</i>	<i>Cowboy Stories</i>
<i>C. G.</i>	<i>Country Gentleman</i>
<i>D.</i>	<i>Delineator</i>
<i>Di.</i>	<i>Dial</i>
<i>D. F.</i>	<i>Detective Fiction Weekly (Flynn's Weekly, to June 2, 1928)</i>
<i>D. S. M.</i>	<i>Detective Stories Magazine</i>
<i>Eb.</i>	<i>Ebony and Topaz. A Collectanea</i>
<i>E.</i>	<i>Echo</i>
<i>Ev.</i>	<i>Everybody's Magazine</i>
<i>Fig.</i>	<i>Figure in the Carpet</i>

<i>Fl.</i>	<i>Flynn's Weekly (Detective Fiction Weekly, after June 2)</i>
<i>F.</i>	<i>Forum</i>
<i>G. H.</i>	<i>Good Housekeeping</i>
<i>H. B.</i>	<i>Harper's Bazar</i>
<i>H.</i>	<i>Harper's Magazine</i>
<i>H. I. and C.</i>	<i>Hearst's International and Cosmopolitan Magazine</i>
<i>L. H. J.</i>	<i>Ladies' Home Journal</i>
<i>L.</i>	<i>Liberty</i>
<i>McCall</i>	<i>McCall's Magazine</i>
<i>McClure</i>	<i>McClure's Magazine</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Menorah Journal</i>
<i>Mun.</i>	<i>Munsey's Magazine</i>
<i>Mys.</i>	<i>Mystery Stories</i>
<i>N. A.</i>	<i>New Age</i>
<i>N. W.</i>	<i>North West Stories</i>
<i>Op.</i>	<i>Opportunity</i>
<i>P.</i>	<i>People's Home Journal</i>
<i>P. R.</i>	<i>Pictorial Review</i>
<i>Pop.</i>	<i>Popular Magazine</i>
<i>R. B.</i>	<i>Red Book Magazine</i>
<i>S. E. P.</i>	<i>Saturday Evening Post</i>
<i>S. E. Q.</i>	<i>Saturday Evening Quill</i>
<i>Scr.</i>	<i>Scribner's Magazine</i>
<i>S. S.</i>	<i>Short Stories</i>
<i>T.</i>	<i>Top-Notch Magazine</i>
<i>T. S.</i>	<i>Three Star Magazine</i>
<i>War</i>	<i>War Stories</i>
<i>W. T.</i>	<i>Weird Tales</i>
<i>W. S.</i>	<i>Western Story Magazine</i>
<i>W. H. C.</i>	<i>Woman's Home Companion</i>
<i>W.</i>	<i>World Magazine</i>
<i>Wr.</i>	<i>Writer Magazine</i>
<i>Y.</i>	<i>Young's Magazine</i>

LIST I

Stories ranking highest:

Adams, Bill, *Home Is the Sailor* (*B. B.*, Feb.).

Aldrich, Bess Streeter, *The Man Who Caught the Weather* (*C.*, July).

- Avery, Stephen Morehouse, Never in This World (*Col.*, May 19).
- Beer, Thomas, To the Living and the Rest of Them (*S. E. P.*, June 2).
- Bellah, James Warner, North of Nowhere (*S. E. P.*, June 9);
"Le Coup du Sot" (*S. E. P.*, July 21).
- Blackman, M. C., Hot Copy (*H.*, Dec.).
- Bradford, Roark, River Witch (*F.*, Nov.); Cold Death (*H.*, July).
- Bradley, Mary Hastings, Not to Every Man (*R. B.*, June).
- Brennan, Frederick H., The Guardeen Angel (*H. I. and C.*, Dec.).
- Bromfield, Louis, The Cat That Lived at the Ritz (*H. B.*, Oct.).
- Brown, Cambray, Episode in a Machine Age (*H.*, Apr.).
- Brubaker, Howard, Dudley and the Cattycornered Dog (*Am.*, Dec.).
- Brush, Katharine, 7 Blocks Apart (*H. I. and C.*, Jan.);
Débutante (*C. H.*, July).
- Bryson, Lyman, Three Vases (*McClure*, Feb.).
- Burt, Katharine Newlin, Galloping Men (*H. I. and C.*, Jan.);
Dove's Nest (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 24).
- Cain, James M., Pastorate (*Am. Merc.*, Mch.).
- Canfield, Dorothy, Not a Pennyworth to Choose (*D.*, July).
- Carrington, Elaine Sterne, A Gentleman of Leisure (*P. R.*, Jan.).
- Carver, Ada Jack, Little Mother of the Church (*H.*, Apr.).
- Casey, Robert, A Messenger to Garcia (*R. B.*, Dec.).
- Clark, Valma, Class (*Scr.*, Dec.).
- Cobb, Irvin S., An Episode at Pintail Lake (*H. I. and C.*, Oct.).
- Connell, Richard, A Million Dollars (*R. B.*, Oct.); The Law
Beaters (*Col.*, June 23).
- Dangerfield, Clinton, Lady New Luck (*L.*, June 9).
- Daniels, Roger, Blood Brothers Ain't Relations (*S. E. P.*,
Oct. 15).
- Davis, Elmer, Sharpshooter (*H. I. and C.*, June).
- Delmar, Viña, John Jones and Wife (*H. I. and C.*, Jan.);
Surprise Party (*Book.*, July).
- Dobie, Charles Caldwell, Magnificent Pose (*L.*, Feb. 4).
- Douglas, Marjory Stoneman, The Peculiar Treasure of Kings
(*S. E. P.*, Nov. 26); Twenty Minutes Late for Dinner
(*S. E. P.*, June 30).

- Duranty, Walter, The Parrot (*R. B.*, Mch.).
- Erskine, John, Cinderella's Daughter (*H. I. and C.*, Feb.).
- Fauset, Arthur Huff, Jumby (*Eb.*, 1928).
- Ferber, Edna, Hey! Taxi! (*H. I. and C.*, Jan.); 9 to 5 (*H. I. and C.*, Aug.).
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott, A Short Trip Home (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 17).
- Gale, Zona, Here! Here! Here! (*Scr.*, Mch.).
- Gerould, Katharine Fullerton, Agony Column (*R. B.*, Mch.).
- Hallet, Richard Matthew, A Bad Washing (*S. E. P.*, May 26).
- Hartman, Lee Foster, Two Minutes to Live (*L.*, May 5).
Reprinted in this volume under title, Mr. Smith.
- Hope, Edward, Stick 'Em Up! (*Scr.*, Nov.).
- Hughes, Rupert, They Were Young Once (*H. I. and C.*, Mch.);
Shop! (*H. I. and C.*, July); Going for a Ride (*H. I. and C.*, Aug.).
- Jenks, Almet, On the Beach (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 31).
- Johnson, Nunnally, The Anti-New York (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 11);
The Actor (*S. E. P.*, May 26).
- Kelland, Clarence Budington, The Case of the Demolished
Lives (*P. R.*, Feb.).
- Kyne, Peter B., Soldier Sleep (*Col.*, Oct. 1); Blacklisted
(*H. I. and C.*, July).
- Lardner, Ring W., Liberty Hall (*H. I. and C.*, Mch.).
- Latimer, Margery, Nellie Bloom (*Book.*, Nov.).
- Leach, A. R., An Old Master—Unknown (*H.*, Jan.).
- Marquand, John, Three Rousing Cheers (*H. I. and C.*, Aug.).
- Marquis, Don, O'Meara, the *Mayflower*—and Mrs. MacLirr
(*Scr.*, Jan.); The Glass Eater (*F.*, Feb.).
- Montague, Margaret Prescott, Silence (*Atl.*, Nov.).
- Morrow, Honoré Willsie, Tad Lincoln's Spy (*H. I. and C.*,
Mch.).
- Paradise, Viola, The Twenty-five Cent Doll (*Ch.*, July).
- Saxon, Lyle, The Long Furrow (*C.*, Oct.).
- Scoggins, C. E., A Man Named Corrigan (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 18).
- Singmaster, Elsie, The Braggart (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 3); Peasant
Blood (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 28).
- Somerville, A. W., Green Rags (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 25).
- Steele, Wilbur Daniel, Lightning (*P. R.*, June); Never Any-
thing That Fades (*H.*, June); "Satan Am a Snake"
(*H.*, Aug.).
- Suckow, Ruth, Midwestern Primitive (*H.*, Mch.).

- Tarleton, Fiswoode, Bloody Ground (*McClure*, May).
 Reprinted in this volume under title, Curtains.
 Tully, Jim, A California Holiday (*Am. Merc.*, Jan.).
 Tupper, Tristram, Four Brothers (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 7).
 Waldron, Webb, Two Men and a Cat (*W. H. C.*, Jan.).
 Waln, Nora, When the Lotus Blooms (*Scr.*, Dec.).
 Warren, Maude Radford, Kingdom, Power and Glory (*C. T.*,
 June 17).
 Watkins, Richard Howells, Up for Glory (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 10).
 Wescott, Glenway, Prohibition (*H.*, Oct.).
 Weston, George, Buried Treasure (*Col.*, Apr. 28).
 Wharton, Edith, Mr. Jones (*L. H. J.*, Apr.); After Holbein
 (*S. E. P.*, May 5).
 Williams, Ben Ames, Cheat the Lady (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 15).
 Wister, Owen, Molting Pelican (*H. I. and C.*, May); Little
 Old Scaffold (*H. I. and C.*, June).

LIST II

Stories ranking second:

- Adams, Bill, Pay as You Go (*Ad.*, Dec. 1); The Hoodoo of
 the Midnight (*S. S.*, July 25).
 Adams, Samuel Hopkins, A Long Yell for Nero (*Col.*, Jan. 21).
 Ade, George, On His Uppers (*H. I. and C.*, July).
 Aiken, Conrad, Your Obituary Well Written (*Scr.*, Nov.);
 Spider, Spider (*Scr.*, Feb.); The Woman-Hater (*Scr.*,
 Apr.); Farewell! Farewell! Farewell! (*Scr.*, Aug.).
 Albert, Edna, Green Leaves (*Arch.*, Jan.).
 Alexander, Elizabeth, Coffee in the Garden (*S. E. P.*, Dec.
 31).
 Aley, Maxwell, One Pound of Sugar (*W. H. C.*, Dec.).
 Ames, John, Flight (*D. F.*, July 7); One for Acquittal (*D. F.*,
 July 14).
 Anderson, Frederick Irving, Big Time (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 1); The
 House of Many Mansions (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 17).
 Annixter, Paul, Monarch of the Lagoons (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 17).
 Atkey, Bertram, A Man of Ambition (*B. B.*, Feb.).
 Avery, Stephen Morehouse, November 11th (*McCall*, Nov.);
 Atlantic Moonlight (*Col.*, April 21).
 Bacon, Josephine Daskam, Provincial (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 3).
 Baldwin, Richard, Cured of an Awful Secret (*L.*, Dec. 24).

- Banning, Margaret Culkin, Marriage à la Mode (*P. R.*, Oct.); The Cooked Goose (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 15); The Alternate (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 22); The Young Man's Slave (*C. H.*, Nov.); The Governor's Grocery Bill (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 11); Small Potatoes (*C. H.*, Apr.); Week-End (*H. I. and C.*, May); Beauty (*S. E. P.*, May 5); Touch Pitch (*Col.*, June 30); Accepted without Pleasure (*Am.*, July); Round the World (*D.*, Aug.).
- Barnard, Leslie Gordon, Green Depths (*D. S. M.*, Dec. 10); A Whip for Midnight (*D. S. M.*, Jan. 21); Showing Off (*D. S. M.*, May 19).
- Barnes, James, Twenty-Three (*S. E. P.*, May 12).
- Barnes, Margaret Ayer, Set a Thief (*P. R.*, Oct.); The Eyes of Youth (*H.*, Mch.); The Dinner-Party (*P. R.*, Aug.).
- Barretto, Larry, The Hussy (*McClure*, Mch.).
- Barry, Joseph W., Flashed Out (*D. F.*, June 30).
- Baugh, Hansell, Masquerade (*Fig.*, Feb.).
- Beach, Rex, Red Cheeks (*H. I. and C.*, Apr.).
- Bechdolt, Frederick R. On the Santa Fé Trail (*H. I. and C.*, Mch.).
- Beer, Thomas, This Very Ancient Song (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 8); The Vulgar Thing (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 29); The Bruitish Person (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 26); Pragmatism (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 21); Apotheosis (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 3); The Grander Casuistry (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 24); The Philosophy of C. J. S. Smith (*S. E. P.*, May 5); Cat Act (*S. E. P.*, May 19); The Noble Nature of Private Waldo Grant (*S. E. P.*, June 30); Wotan's Child (*S. E. P.*, Aug. 4).
- Bellah, James Warner, The Captain's Cordon Rouge (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 12); The Crime of Professor Bonar (*S. E. P.*, May 19); The Cities of the World (*S. E. P.*, June 16).
- Benét, Stephen Vincent, Long Distance (*L. H. J.*, July).
- Bennett, James W., Ph.D. (*W.*, Oct. 23); Heavenly Flowers (*Ad.*, Dec. 1); The Jade Pendant (*W.*, Jan. 15).
- Bercovici, Konrad, Horsemen (*D.*, Jan.); Pepita (*McClure*, Feb.); The Tent Windward (*P. R.*, June).
- Blue, Cecil, "The Flyer" (*Op.*, July).
- Bonner, Mary Graham, The Haunted Husband (*D. F.*, June 23).
- Boyle, Jack, Love of Man (*R. B.*, Dec.).

- Brackett, Charles, Valse Oubliée (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 15); The Travel Test (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 19); Professional Reasons (*S. E. P.*, June 30).
- Bradford, Roark, Muddy Water (*Col.*, Feb. 4); Itching Heel (*Col.*, June 30); Let the Band Play Dixie (*F.*, July).
- Brady, Mariel, The Day of Days (*G. H.*, Nov.).
- Brigg, Nicholas, Storm (*W.*, Aug. 5).
- Broadhurst, George, The Shot (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 17).
- Brown, Alice, Envoy Extraordinary (*W. H. C.*, Jan.).
- Brown, Estelle Aubrey, Lady Isobel's Husband (*C.*, Dec.); Sons of Marthe (*C.*, Apr.).
- Brown, Guthrie, Quality (*Ad.*, Aug. 1).
- Brown, Royal, The Bobbed Bank Bandit (*H. I. and C.*, July).
- Brubaker, Howard, Stardust (*Am.*, June); Late American Lowboy (*Am.*, July).
- Brush, Katharine, The Long Young Dreams (*H. I. and C.*, Nov.); Fumble (*H. I. and C.*, Mch.); Young Man Looking for Trouble (*C. H.*, Apr.); Delirium Trimmings (*C. L.*, Apr.).
- Bryson, Lyman, The Serpent's Wife (*McClure*, Jan.); Too Perfect (*D.*, Aug.).
- Buckley, F. R., Of Gallantry (*Ad.*, Jan. 1).
- Burman, Ben Lucien, Children of Noah (*P. R.*, Feb.).
- Burnet, Dana, Miss Simpson Steps Out (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 7).
- Burt, Katharine Newlin, In the Cool of the Day (*McCall*, May).
- Burt, Struthers, So Ingenuous (*S. E. P.*, June 9); Adventure (*S. E. P.*, June 30).
- Butler, Ellis Parker, Alibi (*S. S.*, Oct. 10); Where There Isn't a Will There's a Way (*Am.*, Nov.); The Doves of Sandona (*L.*, Dec. 3); Just Mark an X (*W. H. C.*, Jan.); Mamie (*C. G.*, Apr.); Brother Bill (*Mun.*, Apr.); Far Seas and Distant Lands (*W. H. C.*, May).
- Campbell, Evelyn, Rescue (*R. B.*, Oct.); Red Handed (*C. T.*, May 13); Pleasure Bent (*G. H.*, June); Raw Material (*C. T.*, Aug. 5).
- Canfield, Dorothy, Deep Channel (*D.*, Mch.).
- Carrington, Elaine Sterne, Movie Riche (*P. R.*, May); Relatively Speaking (*P. R.*, July).
- Carroll, P. J., How Shane Found His Soul (*C. W.*, Mch.).

- Carse, Robert, *The Dancer of San Jorge* (*Col.*, July 14).
 Carver, Ada Jack, *Cotton Dolly* (*H.*, Dec.).
 Cary, Lucian, *What They Said about Each Other* (*C. H.*, Nov.); *The Flycatcher* (*Col.*, June 23).
 Chambers, Robert W., *Big Hearted* (*McCall*, Nov.).
 Child, Richard Washburn, *New Life, New Love* (*Col.*, Oct., 15).
 Clark, Valma, *Sing a Song of Jazz* (*Scr.*, Nov.); *The First Lady of Northrup* (*D.*, July); *Beloved Wife* (*Scr.*, Aug.).
 Claudy, Carl H., *The Double* (*L.*, June 23).
 Coates, Frederick Ames, *Unburnable Evidence* (*D. S. M.*, June 9).
 Cobb, Irvin S., *No Damn Yankee* (*H. I. and C.*, Nov.); *Stranger Things Have Happened* (*H. I. and C.*, Dec.); *Liars All* (*H. I. and C.*, Jan.); *The Mud Clerk* (*H. I. and C.*, Apr.); *Low-combed Roosters* (*H. I. and C.*, June); *Injun Duel* (*H. I. and C.*, July); *Hell and High Water* (*H. I. and C.*, Aug.).
 Coburn, Walt, *Old Whitey Comes Through* (*McClure*, July).
 Cockrell, Stephen, *A Little Old Pitcher* (*G. H.*, Oct.); *Milk if Cream* (*G. H.*, Nov.).
 Coe, Charles Francis, *Belt Buckle* (*Mun.*, June).
 Cohen, O. R., *Less Majesty* (*C. H.*, Nov.); *Double or Nothing* (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 19); *Honestly It's the Best Policy* (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 21); *The Sprinting Press* (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 3); *Money for Sooth* (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 24); *Black Beauty* (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 28); *A Toot for a Toot* (*S. E. P.*, May 19); *The Frame-Up* (*Am.*, June); *The Big Charade* (*C. T.*, June 10); *Brooch of Contract* (*S. E. P.*, July); *Big Time* (*D.*, Aug.).
 Colby, Natalie Sedgwick, *Second Honeymoon* (*P. R.*, July).
 Coleman, Alta May, *Love Conquers All* (*C. T.*, Aug. 12).
 Comfort, Will Levington, *The Door Marked D* (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 31).
 Connell, Richard, *The Crab and the Sunbeam* (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 24); *\$100* (*H. I. and C.*, Aug.).
 Connolly, James B., *No Odds too Great* (*McClure*, Aug.).
 Cooper, Courtney Ryley, *Muskeg* (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 7); *A Lady of the Films* (*C. T.*, Jan. 8); *His Weight in Wildcats* (*Col.*, May 26).

- Corley, Donald, The Eyes of Compassion (*H.*, Jan.); The Bride's Feast (*P. R.*, Jan.); Eyes of India (*P. R.*, Aug.).
- Cram, Mildred, Face in the Mist (*C. H.*, Feb.); The Space Getter (*C. H.*, June).
- Cranston, Claudia, Pride (*G. H.*, Mch.); The Stars and Bars (*G. H.*, Aug.).
- Crowell, Chester T., Old Hawk Eye (*Am.*, Nov.); "Never Did Run Smooth" (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 17); The Fair-haired Boys (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 24); Larkin Rocks the Boat (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 10); Lovely Gravy (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 21); A Yank by Any Name (*Col.*, July 14).
- Croy, Homer, Wilkie's Unforgivable Sin (*P. R.*, Apr.).
- Dale, Virginia, The Mystery of the Theatre Aisle (*R. B.*, June).
- Dangerfield, Clinton, The Trap (*L.*, Jan. 14).
- Daniels, Roger, "You Can't Lose a Luck Houn'" (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 26).
- Davies, Oma Almona, Leave the Heir Pay (*Col.*, Nov. 19); Between Exodus and Leviticus (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 3); Oft in the Silly Night (*S. E. P.*, June 30).
- Davis, Elmer, Ungracious Lady (*H.*, Feb.); Amateur (*Col.*, Mch. 17); Lion's Skin (*Col.*, July 14).
- Davis, J. Frank, Coward's Courage (*N. W.*, Sec. Mch. Issue).
- Davis, John P., Verisimilitude (*Eb.*, 1928).
- De Bra, Lemuel, The Brown Bottle (*S. S.*, Feb. 10); The Kang-he Poison Jar (*B. B.*, Aug.).
- De Leon, Walter, The Lacey Sisters (*R. B.*, Oct.).
- De Polo, Harold, New Shoes (*Fl.*, Mch. 3); The Man Who Tried to Die (*D. F.*, June 23).
- De Voto, Bernard, Sleeping Dogs (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 19); This Must Not Get Out! (*R. B.*, Jan.); Ranch Wondering (*S. E. P.*, June 2).
- Delmar, Viña, She Has a Little Girl (*L.*, Oct. 1); North of Fifty-Third (*L.*, Nov. 5); The Sword of Damocles (*L.*, Feb. 25); Companionate (*L.*, May 19); Uptown Woman (*R. B.*, July).
- Derieux, Mary, A Door to Be Opened (*G. H.*, May).
- Detzer, Karl W., Three A. M. on Arrow-Head Island (*S. S.*, Dec. 10); Under Crashing Walls (*Mun.*, Jan.); Ladders of Hell (*S. S.*, Jan. 10); The Smell of Smoke (*L.*, June 16).

- Dickson, Harris, The Son and Heir (*S. E. P.*, June 2).
 Diefenthaler, Andra, Silences (*Dial.*, Aug.).
 Dockstader, Charlotte, The Goose Flies South (*D. S. M.*, May 19); A Gentleman Going West (*D. S. M.*, July 21); A Penny Saved (*D. S. M.*, Aug. 18).
 Downing, J. Hyatt, We Went West (*Scr.*, May).
 Dreiser, Theodore, Rella (*H. I. and C.*, Apr.); Olive Brand (*H. I. and C.*, May).
 Dwyer, James Francis, Bride of the Centuries (*McCall*, Jan.); Golden Star of Carolina (*McCall*, July); Elephants o' Hannibal (*W. H. C.*, July).
 Dyer, Walter A., A Deferred Reckoning (*C. W.*, Apr.).
 Eastman, Rebecca Hooper, Young Mrs. Dobson (*L. H. J.*, Aug.).
 Edgar, Day, The Kind Women Like (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 22); Snob's Progress (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 14); Escape, Extra Narrow (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 3); In Senior Spring (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 28); Achilles' Unlit Lamp (*S. E. P.*, July 14).
 Edholm, C. L., Smiley (*C. T.*, Feb. 19).
 Edmonds, Walter D., Duet in September (*Scr.*, June); Ninety (*Atl.*, Aug.).
 Edmunds, Frederica, The Journey (*C. W.*, July).
 Ellerbe, Alma and Paul, The Guest at Spaniard's Pass (*Col.*, Jan. 28); One Summer's Night (*D.*, July).
 Ellerbe, Rose L., The Sacred Corner (*C. W.*, July).
 Elston, Allan Vaughan, Path of Glory (*S. S.*, Mch. 10); The Blood Test (*T. S.*, Sec. Apr. No.); The Vanishing Vandal (*Ad.*, June 1).
 England, George Allan, Dorymates (*Ad.*, Jan. 1).
 Erhard, Mary McEnnery, The Lost Bride of Erin (*C. W.*, Mch.).
 Erskine, John, Conversion (*H. I. and C.*, Nov.); The Last Voyage of Odysseus (*H. I. and C.*, Dec.); Circe and the Higher Life (*H. I. and C.*, May).
 Erskine, Laurie York, Decorations (*Col.*, Oct. 29); Pryde's Fall (*Col.*, July 21).
 Evans, Ida M., Black Java Lily (*Am.*, Feb.).
 Evarts, Hal. G., Chaparral (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 8).
 Farrell, Andrew, The Old Man (*P. R.*, Aug.).
 Fergusson, Harvey, Tropical Air (*McCall*, Jan.).
 Fischer, Charles Victor, Betelnut (*Ad.*, May 15).

- Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *The Love Boat* (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 8); *The Bowl* (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 21); *Magnetism* (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 3); *The Scandal Detectives* (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 28); *A Night at the Fair* (*S. E. P.*, July 21).
- Flynn, T. T., *Castaway* (*Ad.*, Apr. 15).
- Ford, Sewell, *Mayzie and the Diplomat* (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 21).
- Foster, Jeannette Howard, *Lucky Star* (*H.*, Oct.).
- Foster, Maximilian, *The Weather in Argentine* (*S. E. P.*, June 23); *May Corn* (*S. E. P.*, July 21).
- Fowler, Richard B., *Three Wagons* (*Scr.*, Apr.).
- Furniss, Ruth Pine, *Bess Does Her Best* (*C. T.*, Nov. 27).
- Gale, Zona, *Half a Million* (*L. H. J.*, Apr.).
- Gelzer, Jay, *Forgotten Melody* (*G. H.*, Aug.).
- Gerould, Katharine Fullerton, *Love's Pilgrimage* (*H.*, Oct.).
- Gilbert, Daisy Thorne, *The Old House Speaks* (*G. H.*, June).
- Glass, Montague, *A Good Job for Julius* (*H. I. and C.*, Jan.).
- Gordon, Eugene, *Alien* (*S. E. Q.*, First No.—Annual-June).
- Greene, Frederick Stuart, *The Club's Librarian* (*Pop.*, June 30).
- Grey, Clifford, *Pears Bring Tears* (*D.*, June).
- Griebing, Robert T., *A Wager in Candlesticks* (*W. T.*, May).
- Griffin, Frederick, *Swamp Sanctuary* (*B. B.*, July).
- Haefeli, Walter, Jr., *Jonah* (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 7).
- Halbert, Rowena Anne, *Ol' Kainturkee* (*W.*, Nov. 20).
- Hallet, Richard Matthews, *Foot-Loose* (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 10); *One Shirt and One Soul* (*S. E. P.*, May 12).
- Harris, Kennett, *The Blowhard* (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 12); *The Luck of Loss* (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 18); *Smoothing the True-Love Trail* (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 7); *When It Comes to Women* (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 21); *The Uses of Violence* (*S. E. P.*, June 2).
- Hawthorne, Ruth, *Two Hard-Boiled Eggs* (*L.*, June 30).
- Hendrickson, David, *Cactus Biglow's Cat* (*McClure*, May).
- Hergesheimer, Joseph, *Pittsburgh* (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 29); *Philadelphia* (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 12); *Coral* (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 31); *Coral* (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 14); *Coral* (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 28); *Coral* (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 11); *Coral* (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 25); *Coral* (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 10); *Coral* (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 24); *Coral* (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 14); *Coral* (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 28).
- Herrick, Maude Zella, *Learn That Guy* (*R. B.*, June).

- Heyward, Dorothy, *The Young Ghost* (*McCall*, Feb.).
- Hogue, Ellen, and Bechdolt, Jack, *The Spirit of Europa* (*Mun.*, Apr.).
- Holt, Franklin, *On the Dark Trail* (*Scr.*, July).
- Hope, Edward, *Immoral Victory* (*P. R.*, Oct.); *False Alarm* (*P. R.*, Feb.).
- Hopper, James, 1961 (*D.*, Nov.); *Squiffy* (*G. H.*, June).
- Hoyt, Nancy, *Congressional Limited* (*Book.*, Aug.); *The Undiplomatic List* (*H. B.*, Aug.).
- Huey, Anna V., *The Blessed Spot* (*Scr.*, Dec.).
- Hughes, Rupert, *A Girl on a Barge* (*H. I. and C.*, Oct.); *Blood of the Crellins* (*H. I. and C.*, May).
- Hull, Helen R., *Riding the Whirlwind* (*C. T.*, Feb. 5).
- Hurst, Fannie, *The Left Hand of God* (*H. I. and C.*, Dec.); *Give This Little Girl a Hand* (*H. I. and C.*, Feb.).
- Huston, McCready, *With Benefit of Bandit* (*P. R.*, Jan.); *Please Face the Front* (*C. H.*, Feb.); *Tenth Sunday after Christmas* (*H.*, Aug.).
- Irwin, Wallace, *Pansy's Ear* (*L.*, Mch. 10).
- Irwin, Will, *Mountain Madness* (*McClure*, June); *Between the Lines* (*McClure*, Aug.).
- Jackson, Charles Tenney, *Fiddlers Three* (*Pop.*, Mch. 3); *Bubbles* (*Pop.*, Mch. 17); *The Man in the Grass* (*Pop.*, May 26).
- Jackson, Margaret Weymouth, *Some Flies Like Vinegar* (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 5); *Office Broke* (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 10); *Miss Sims Resigns* (*S. E. P.*, May 26).
- Jameson, Booth, *Charles V and the Hitch Hikers* (*S. E. P.*, May 26).
- Jay, Mae Foster, *Old Eve and a Man's Whim* (*McClure*, Feb.).
- Jensen, Oscar E., *The Can-Rusher* (*Scr.*, Mch.).
- John, William M., *Shaken Together and Running Over* (*W.*, Dec. 4); *Tilly Tells the Story* (*C.*, Dec.); *Miss Pansy's Pansies* (*C.*, July).
- Johnson, Gladys E., *Magic Casements* (*Mun.*, May).
- Johnson, Nunnally, *An Artist Has His Pride* (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 3); *Comedy* (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 17); *The Divine Afflatus* (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 28).
- Johnson, Owen, *Law and Disorder* (*R. B.*, Nov.).
- Johnston, Mary, *The Buccaneer* (*L. H. J.*, June); *Black Lace* (*L. H. J.*, Aug.).

- Jordan, Elizabeth, Severn Celebrates Christmas (*C. T.*, Dec. 25); The Joke Was on Francis (*Mun.*, Feb.); The Great Peacock (*McCall*, Mch.); Tommy Fixes It (*C. T.*, June 3); Making a Picture of Mary (*C. T.*, July 29).
- Kahler, Hugh MacNair, Gratitude (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 3); Pass-words (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 14); The Dominator (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 31); The Bright Face of Duty (*S. E. P.* May 5); Talk (*S. E. P.*, May 19); The Young Barbarians (*L. H. J.*, Aug.).
- Kelland, Clarence Budington, Forgery (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 17); The First Thousand (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 7); Sawdust (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 21); Scattergood Causes a Snake to Bite (*Am.*, Feb.); Against the Rules (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 4); Counter-irritant (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 18); Cornered (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 10); Diplomacy (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 14); The Rightful Prince (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 28); The Secret Helpers (*S. E. P.*, May 12); Sir Galahad (*S. E. P.*, May 26); A Superfluous Cupid (*S. E. P.*, June 23); A Rhapsody in Green (*S. E. P.*, Aug. 4).
- Kelley, T. Howard, Lingeray Fransay (*McClure*, July).
- Kempton, Kenneth Payson, Sea Magic (*Ad.*, May 1).
- Kennedy, John B., Labor of Love (*P. R.*, June).
- Kerr, Sophie, Merry-Go-Round (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 2); Negligé (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 3).
- Kilbourne, Fannie, As Much True Happiness (*W. H. C.*, Jan.)
There's a Great Difference in Women (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 21); Sauce for the Goose (*Am.*, Apr.); The Flaw in the Product (*L. H. J.*, Aug.).
- King, Rufus, Without a Clue (*R. B.*, Aug.).
- Knight, Clifford, The Ham at Eagle Butte (*S. S.*, Mch. 10).
- Kohler, Madeline, Queen's Pawn (*W.*, Feb. 12).
- Kutner, Manette, This Is the Life (*H. I. and C.*, Mch.).
- Kyne, Peter B., Promoting Patricio (*Col.*, Mch. 24); Dutch Courage (*C. H.*, Apr.); All for Love (*H. I. and C.*, June).
- Lamb, Harold, The Red Cock Crows (*Col.*, June 9).
- Landon, Herman, White Blackmail (*D. S. M.*, June 9).
- Lardner, Ring W., Man Not Overboard (*H. I. and C.*, Nov.); Anniversary (*H. I. and C.*, Jan.); Nora (*H. I. and C.*, Feb.); Mr. Frisbie (*H. I. and C.*, June); Wedding Day (*H. I. and C.*, July).

- Larsson, Genevieve, Mary Justine and the Gentle One (*C.*, Dec.).
- Lea, Fannie Heaslip, Expert Testimony (*R. B.*, Nov.); Wild-Goose Chase (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 7); None So Blind (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 17); Galahad Himself (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 31); Hokum and Roses (*S. E. P.*, Aug. 4).
- Leslie, Hal Field, Six Pounds of Fury (*Ad.*, May 15).
- Lhevinne, Isadore, The Man without a Face (*Am. H.*, Dec. 30).
- Liebe, Hapsburg, Fields of Boaz (*T. S.*, Sec. Apr. No.).
- Lincoln, Freeman, No, Not Fifty Cents (*L. H. J.*, May); Outer Beach (*G. H.*, Aug.).
- Littell, Edmund M., The Big "I" and "Me" Man (*McClure*, Aug.).
- Lloyd, Beatrix Demarest, And Other Valuable Considerations (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 17).
- Loggins, Vernon, "—Neber Said a Mumblin' Word" (*Op.*, Apr.).
- Lovelace, Delos, Circulation! (*N. A.*, Jan.); Fussbudget! (*Am.*, Feb.); Sleeping Cold (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 25); Proud Old Rooster (*Am.*, Mch.); Yes, Ma'am! (*C. G.*, May).
- Lyle, Eugene P., Whose Move? (*McClure*, Jan.).
- McBlair, Robert, A South Sea Tragedy (*Mun.*, July).
- McCallum, Mella Russell, The White Flame (*W. H. C.*, July).
- McConnell, Burt M., The First Law of Life (*R. B.*, Aug.).
- McCulloch, F. H., Aunt Car'line's Mission (*McCall*, Nov.).
- MacDonald, Edwina, The Crooked Angel (*C. T.*, Oct. 16).
- McFee, William, Captain Musker's Vacation (*R. B.*, May).
- McMorrow, Thomas, People against Meade (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 19).
- McMorrow, Will, The Bond Eternal (*Pop.*, Apr. 21); All Is Not Gold (*Pop.*, July 20).
- McNutt, William Slavens, The Price of Scotch (*Col.*, Nov. 19); Alfie (*McClure*, Mch.); Cigarette Money (*R. B.*, May); Luck (*Col.*, July 21); The Whining Kid Blooms (*L.*, Aug. 4).
- Mabie, Louise Kennedy, Silver (*L. H. J.*, Oct.).
- Mahin, John Lee, Yo-Ho-Ho, and a Bottle (*L. H. J.*, Feb.).
- Marmur, Jacland, China (*S. S.*, Feb. 25).
- Marquand, J. P., The Harvard Square Student (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 10); The Last of the Tories (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 24);

- As the Case May Be— (*S. E. P.*, June 16); Do Tell Me, Doctor Johnson (*S. E. P.*, July 14).
- Marquis, Don, The Flea, the Pup, and the Millennium (*Scr.*, Dec.).
- Mason, Arthur, Crack On! (*C.*, Aug.).
- Matheus, John, General Drums (*Eb.*, 1928).
- Means, E. K., A Hot One (*Mun.*, Nov.); The Great Tickfall Cotton Gamble (*Mun.*, Dec.); A Matrimony Fixer (*Mun.*, Feb.); A Royal Road to Fortune (*Mun.*, Mch.); Slaughter in the Smoke House (*Mun.*, Apr.); For President—Skeeter Butts (*Mun.*, June); The Last Act (*Mun.*, July); Grave Clothes (*Mun.*, Aug.).
- Meeker, Arthur, Jr., Third Generation (*H. B.*, Aug.).
- Mercein, Eleanor, Modo Correcto (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 21); Mimosa Glances (*S. E. P.*, July 7).
- Meriwether, Susan, Lace-Paper (*P. R.*, Feb.).
- Merwin, Samuel, Guns and a Girl (*L. H. J.*, Oct.); This World's a State (*Col.*, May 12).
- Miller, Alice Duer, Devoted Men (*W. H. C.*, Nov.).
- Miller, Helen Topping, Sainted Ladies (*McClure*, June).
- Mitchell, Eleanor Black, The Ambassador of Rivington Street (*H. I. and C.*, Aug.).
- Mitchell, Ruth Comfort, The Cruise of the Bookmobile (*W. H. C.*, Feb.).
- Montross, Lois Seyster, T. Thomas Finds Wisdom (*C. H.*, Mch.); Please Excuse Velma (*P. R.*, May).
- Moore, Muriel, The Three-Bottle Story (*Scr.*, July).
- Morgan, Bassett, The Skeleton Under the Lamp (*W. T.*, May).
- Morris, Emanuel, Schubert's Serenade (*W.*, Dec. 18).
- Morris, Gouverneur, Many Mansions (*H. B.*, Oct.).
- Mumford, Ethel Watts, In the Blood (*D.*, Mch.).
- Nason, Leonard H., The Hungry Battalion (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 15); Ships of the Line (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 14); The Gun in the Archway (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 11); Narrow Waters (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 14).
- Neidig, William J., Pursuit (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 10); The Least of These (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 14).
- Norris, Kathleen, At 35 (*H. I. and C.*, Dec.); The Complete Letter-Writter (*H. I. and C.*, May).
- O'Hagan, Anne, Time's Whirligig and Theodora (*C. T.*, Jan. 15).

- Oliver, Jennie Harris, A Bridge of Lies (*G. H.*, Jan.); It Is Morning (*G. H.*, July).
- Ostern, Florence, The Uncivil Engineer (*L. H. J.*, Mch.).
- Paradise, Viola, Wild West (*P. R.*, Apr.).
- Parker, Austin, Poor but Proud (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 4); The Blandings (*S. E. P.*, May 26).
- Parker, Maude, Love (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 14).
- Patterson, Frances Taylor, The Ghostways (*Scr.*, Dec.).
- Patterson, Norma, Soldiers All (*G. H.*, Jan.).
- Pattullo, George, Can't Keep a Good Man Down (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 28).
- Paynter, Ernest, He'll Never Tell (*Fl.*, Feb. 11); The Final Clean-Up (*D. F.*, June 16).
- Pelley, William Dudley, Gun-Fight (*R. B.*, Jan.); The Assassin (*R. B.*, Feb.); The Magic Carpet (*Col.*, Apr. 21).
- Pendarues, C. G., The Eighth Green Man (*W. T.*, Mch.).
- Perry, Lawrence, Knockout (*R. B.*, Oct.); Straight-Arm Stuff (*Col.*, Nov. 5); Aunt Mim (*C. T.*, Dec. 11).
- Perry, Montanye, Out of Sight 'n' Sound of the Sea (*F.*, Dec.).
- Perry, Peter, The Scar (*Fl.*, Dec. 10); Murder Will Out (*D. F.*, June 2).
- Peterkin, Julia, A Proudful Fellow (*C.*, May).
- Phelps, Carrington, Too Well Remembered (*Col.*, July 28).
- Pinkerton, Robert E., The Hard and Mean Way (*S. S.*, Aug. 10).
- Poole, Ernest, Was It a Sapphire? (*H. I. and C.*, Aug.).
- Post, Melville Davisson, Colonel Braxton Chooses a Client, but Refuses to Accept a Fee (*Am.*, Apr.).
- Price, Frank, Inside Dope (*Fl.*, May 26).
- Putnam, Nina Wilcox, New York to Yonkers in a Day (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 17).
- Redman, Ben Ray, Secret Sorrow (*D.*, June); The Perfect Crime (*H.*, Aug.).
- Rhodes, Eugene Manlove, Aforesaid Bates (*H. I. and C.*, Aug.).
- Richardson, Norval, A Moment of Clear Vision (*C. T.*, Aug. 19); Day out of Dark (*L.*, Jan. 14).
- Roberts, Charles G. D., Lone Clearing (*Ev.*, Dec.).
- Robertson, Frank C., The Smother Hole (*S. S.*, Mch. 10).
- Robins, Nelson, The Wrong Pocket (*D. F.*, June 9).
- Robinson, Henry Morton, Guggy (*C.*, Nov.).

- Roche, Arthur Somers, Success (*L.*, Nov. 12); Happiness (*H. I. and C.*, June).
- Roe, Vingie E., The Candles of the Lord (*McCall*, Oct.); The Painted Runner (*P. R.*, Mch.).
- Ross, Mary Lowrey, Delilah (*S. E. P.*, June 16); The Ring (*L. H. J.*, Aug.).
- Rutledge, Maryse, Ancestors While You Wait (*Col.*, Mch. 31).
- Ryan, Will, The Code (*S. S.*, Jan. 25).
- Sangster, Margaret E., The Mother (*D.*, Apr.); The Fire of Youth (*G. H.*, Apr.).
- Saville, Jane, Blake's Wild Lass (*Col.*, Aug. 11).
- Schisgall, Oscar, The Slim Chance (*S. S.*, Oct. 25); A Continental Custom (*C. T.*, May 20).
- Scott, Leroy, No Questions Asked (*C. T.*, Mch. 25).
- Seifert, Shirley, Truly Beautiful (*D.*, Nov.).
- Shipp, Margaret Busbee, The Prethereau Sapphire (*Mun.*, Apr.).
- Shore, Viola Brothers, A Stretch of the Imagination (*L.*, Oct. 15); The Laura Lie (*L.*, Dec. 31); The Proof of the Putting (*C. H.*, Dec.).
- Singmaster, Elsie, A Student of Languages (*W. H. C.*, Oct.); My Mister (*P. R.*, May); The Early Bird (*S. E. P.*, June 16).
- Smith, Faith Ellen, The Young Magi (*Am.*, Dec.).
- Smith, Gordon Arthur, The Emerald (*H.*, July).
- Sneddon, Robert W., The Third Murder (*D. F.*, June 30).
- Somerville, A. W., Authorized by the Time-Table (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 26); Sand—and Gravel— (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 31); Over the Hump (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 21); High Class Security (*S. E. P.*, June 30); High Water (*S. E. P.*, July 14).
- Spears, Raymond S., The Sheriff's Education Son (*Ev.*, Nov.); The Peace Makers (*Pop.*, Jan. 21); The Poisoner (*Ad.*, Mch. 15); Souls of Honor (*Ad.*, Aug. 1).
- Springer, Fleta Campbell, Young Orchard (*H.*, May).
- Squier, Emma-Lindsay, The Shadowy Lady of Noel (*McCall*, Dec.); Every Day Except Friday (*D.*, Apr.); A Man of Honor (*Col.*, May 26); The Tiger God Comes Home (*C. G.*, July; Tampoco (*L. H. J.*, Aug.); The Little Lost Stars of Chapala (*G. H.*, Aug.).

- Starrett, Vincent, An F. O. B. Inheritance (*S. S.*, Nov. 10).
 Steele, Wilbur Daniel, An American Comedy (*P. R.*, Oct.).
 Stevens, James, Oleman Hattie (*Ad.*, July 15).
 Stone, Elinore Cowan, Viva Uncle Sam! (*G. H.*, Oct.).
 Storrs, M. L., Minstrelsy (*McClure*, Jan.).
 Strange, John Stephen, The Harvey Murder (*Col.*, Apr. 21).
 Street, Julian, The Spirit of Seventy-six (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 29).
 Sturm, Justin, He Named Her Justice (*C. T.*, Mch. 18).
 Suckow, Ruth, Good Pals (*Am. Merc.*, Oct.); Spinster and Cat (*H.*, June).
 Synon, Mary, Our Very Best People (*L. H. J.*, July.).
 Tarkington, Booth, Mrs. Bender and Napoleon (*W. H. C.*, Jan.).
 Tarleton, Fiswoode, Leaven (*McClure*, Feb.); The Blue Lizard (*W. T.*, June).
 Terhune, Albert Payson, The Jirx Fancier (*L. H. J.*, Oct.); Jock (*D.*, Apr.); Sark (*C. G.*, Apr.).
 Thomas-Finley, Elizabeth, The Last Pew (*C.*, Oct.).
 Tiernan, John L., Holdup (*Fl.*, Apr. 14); Written Out (*Fl.*, May 5).
 Tilden, Freeman, Saturday Night and No Beans (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 28).
 Titus, Harold, The Dee-troit Kid (*Am.*, Apr.); A Flock of Birds (*T.*, May 15).
 Tompkins, Juliet Wilbur, Alley Cat (*C. T.*, July 1).
 Train, Arthur, The Doodle Bug (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 1).
 Troy, William, Pariah (*Fig.*, Feb.).
 Tully, Jim, Thieves and Vagabonds (*Am. Merc.*, May).
 Turnbull, Agnes Sligh, Hard as Nails (*Am.*, Mch.); The Shiner Up (*Am.*, May).
 Tuttle, W. C., His Brother's Keeper (*S. S.*, Jan. 25).
 Ueland, Brenda, The Great Big Society Sheik (*L. H. J.*, Oct.); I Mean Marriage Is Terrible (*D.*, Nov.).
 Upson, William Hazlett, He Got the Job (*S. E. P.*, May 12).
 Van de Water, Frederic F., The Amelekite Smiter (*Pop.*, July 20).
 Volney, Dex, Kinross the Killer (*S. S.*, July 10).
 Wagner, Rob, A Tame Story (*S. E. P.*, July 21).
 Waldron, Webb, Ice and Fire (*W. H. C.*, Mch.).
 Ward, Millard, Second Mate of Oceans (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 7).
 Ware, Edward Parrish, The Jungle Beast (*D. F.*, June 30).

- Warren, Maude Radford, Conquering Hero (*C. T.*, Oct. 30).
Watkins, Maurine, Butterfly Goes Home (*H. I. and C.*, Oct.);
Poison (*H. I. and C.*, Nov.); Doors (*H. I. and C.*, July).
Way, Isabelle Stewart, Shallow Rooted (*W.*, Mch. 11); A
Perfect Western (*W.*, July 29).
Webber, Frank Martin, Sackcloth and Laurel (*H.*, Feb.).
Wescott, Glenway, The Whistling Swan (*Book.*, June); A
Guilty Woman (*C.*, Aug.).
West, Dorothy, An Unimportant Man (*S. E. Q.*, First No.—
Annual—June, 1928).
Weston, George, The Temple at Chefoo (*L. H. J.*, Apr.);
The Spider and the Fly (*S. E. P.*, July 7); The Little
Stowaway (*L. H. J.*, Aug.).
Wetjen, Albert Richard, A Liverpool Lochinvar (*S. E. P.*,
June 9).
White, Ared, Secret Orders (*Ev.*, Dec.); Silhouettes (*Ev.*,
Jan.); Discipline (*L.*, June 23).
White, Nelia Gardner, Growing (*Am.*, Nov.); Helga Lind and
the Bright Noel (*Am.*, Jan.).
White, Stewart Edward, Hot Dog (*S. E. P.*, June 2).
Whitman, Stephen F., When I Get Big (*C. H.*, Jan.).
Wiley, Hugh, Us (*S. E. P.*, Jan. 28); The Homing of Hum
Ding (*S. E. P.*, Apr. 28).
Williams, Ben Ames, Detour (*S. E. P.*, Oct. 8); A Hot Toddy
(*S. E. P.*, Jan. 7); The Good Girl (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 18);
Heeby Jeeby (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 17); General Delivery
(*S. E. P.*, Mch. 31); An Ancient Apparition (*C. G.*,
Apr.); The Man on Horseback (*S. E. P.*, May 5); The
Premeditated Prodgal (*S. E. P.*, June 23).
Williams, Henry Meade, Death on Carmine Street (*Scr.*,
June).
Williams, Valentine, The Pigeon Man (*B. B.*, Nov.).
Williams, Wythe, 35 in the Black (*S. E. P.*, Mch. 31).
Willson, Dixie, Meet the Duchess (*L.*, Aug. 4).
Wilson, Mary Badger, Discarding from Strength (*S. E. P.*,
Dec. 24).
Winslow, Thyra Samter, A Happy Ending (*H. I. and C.*, Nov.
27); The Will (*L.*, Nov.).
Winsmore, Robert S., The Bubble Reputation (*S. E. P.*,
Oct. 1).
Wire, H. C., Duty (*S. S.*, Jan. 10).

- Wister, Owen, At the Sign of the Last Chance (*H. I. and C.*, Feb.).
- Wolff, William Almon, The End of Eileen Grant (*L.*, Jan. 7); The Broken Circle (*L.*, Mch. 17); A Blow for Freedom (*Col.*, July 29); Night Club (*Col.*, Aug. 11).
- Woolrich, Cornell, Mother and Daughter (*C. H.*, Aug.).
- Worts, George F., Them's Wyandotte's (*S. E. P.*, Feb. 11).
- Wright, Harold Bell, A Desert Santa Claus (*L. H. J.*, Dec.).
- Wynn, Alice Gorton, The Call of the Bayou (*C. W.*, Apr.).
- Wynn, Alzo, Treacherous Freight (*T. S.*, Sec. Apr. No.).
- Wynne, Stella, Ebony Magic (*W. T.*, Mch.).

LIST III

Stories ranking third:

- Abbott, An Adventure with a Gentleman (*L. H. J.*, Apr.).
- Adams, Frank R., Grandfather's Gluck (*L.*, Oct. 22); Big Enough (*Mun.*, June); "Send Haggerty!" (*Mun.*, Aug.).
- Adams, Lucy Wilcox, Revolution (*Atl.*, July).
- Addington, Sarah, Figaro and the Lady (*W. H. C.*, Feb.).
- Aiken, Conrad, The Moment (*H.*, May).
- Ames, John, Death Mountain (*Fl.*, Dec. 3); Wall Street, Beware! (*Fl.*, Jan. 28); The Hawk (*Fl.*, Feb. 4); The Stolen Air Mail (*Fl.*, Feb. 25); A Follow-Up Story (*Fl.*, Mch. 10).
- Augsburg, Paul Deresco, Gallows Jest (*D. S. M.*, Apr. 14).
- Bailey, H. C., The Pink Macaw (*Fl.*, Feb. 4); The Woman in Wood (*Fl.*, Mch. 17).
- Bailey, Temple, The Star in the Well (*McCall*, Dec.).
- Banning, Margaret Culkin, The Fine Seam (*L. H. J.*, Apr.); The Lean Years (*L. H. J.*, May); The Shore Road (*Am.*, Aug.).
- Barnard, Leslie Gordon, Spring Folly (*D. S. M.*, July 21); Tiger Woman (*D. S. M.*, Aug. 18).
- Barnes, Margaret Ayer, The Charmer (*P. R.*, Mch.).
- Barretto, Larry, Confidence (*Pop.*, July 20).
- Barry, Joseph W., Too Plausible (*D. F.*, July 7).
- Bechdolt, Jack, Slawson's Secondhand Car (*Mun.*, Jan.); Set a Thief (*Mun.*, July).
- Beer, Thomas, Midnight Blues (*S. E. P.*, July 14).

- Bellah, James Warner, The Cream Beef Maker (*C. H.*, Mch.); We Want Charlie! (*Col.*, June 9); The Man Who Beat Lupo (*S. E. P.*, July 7).
- Booth, Christopher B., Sweet Revenge (*D. S. M.*, Aug. 18).
- Boyd, Thomas, A Bow to Progress (*Scr.*, Oct.).
- Bradford, Roark, The Tricker (*Col.*, Dec. 31); The Old He-coon of the John D. Grace (*Col.*, Mch. 17); Monkey Man (*Col.*, May 5); Greener Pastures (*Col.*, June 2).
- Bradley, Mary Hastings, The Ghost Girl (*R. B.*, Apr.).
- Bray, William Donald, Bindle Stiff (*Ev.*, June).
- Brennan, Frank Hazlitt, Snitch (*L.*, Dec. 3).
- Bretherton, Vivien R. Fionon Tastes of Life (*McCall*, Oct.); Clever Girl (*McCall*, Feb.); Once in the Spring-time (*H. G.*, June).
- Brown, Bernice, Insulting Janie (*L.*, Feb. 18).
- Brown, M. Curtis, A Prescription for Mrs. Higson (*F.*, June).
- Brown, Royal, No Trouble at All (*McCall*, Aug.).
- Brubaker, Howard, Nowhere in Particular (*Am.*, Jan.); High Hattie (*Am.*, May).
- Burt, Katharine Newlin, Fireflies (*McCall*, Oct.); The Beautiful House (*L. H. J.*, May).
- Butler, Ellis Parker, The Coral Snake (*Mun.*, Aug.); Perfection Plus (*W. H. C.*, Aug.).
- Byrnes, Roane Fleming "Keep Your Head Above Water." (*St. Nicholas*, Apr.).
- Caldwell, Marie R., Fishing for Mrs. Ripley (*Scr.*, Oct.).
- Carr, Robert S., Whispers (*W. T.*, Apr.).
- Chambers, Robert W., Ready Made (*McCall*, Apr.).
- Clausen, Carl, Pebbles (*R. B.*, Mch.); Rummy (*Mys.*, Mch.).
- Coates, Frederick Ames, Telltale Ball (*D. S. M.*, Jan. 21).
- Colby, Nathalie Sedgwick, The Wild Arab (*P. R.*, Jan.).
- Collins, Charles, The End Zone (*C. T.*, Nov. 13).
- Conlon, Ben, Drive It Yourself! (*A. A.*, Oct. 8).
- Connell, Catharine, Ha! Me Proud Beauty! (*W. H. C.*, Dec.).
- Connell, Richard, The Crasher (*S. E. P.*, Dec. 3); Love Shy (*C. T.*, July 8); The Sting of the Wasp (*Am.*, Aug.).
- Conrad, Cyril J., Recoil (*Clues*, Sec. Mch. No.).
- Conway, Faulkner, Who Saved Slim? (*Fl.*, Nov. 5); Words—and—Words (*Fl.*, Feb. 11).
- Cooper, Courtney Ryley, Old Bill (*Col.*, Mch. 24); Weary River (*Col.*, Aug. 11).

- Cranston, Claudia, The Chandelier-Gazers (*G. H.*, July).
 Creel, George, The Woman of Magdala (*Col.*, Apr. 14).
 Crowell, Chester T., Sam Meets a Saint (*McClure*, Mch.).
 Crow, Homer, Apron Strings (*P. R.*, Oct.); The Rain Maker (*Mun.*, June).
 Curtiss, Philip, The Shouting Sherwoods (*L. H. J.*, Feb.).
 Dalrymple, Leona, Bohemia's Baby (*McCall*, Feb.).
 Davis, Dorothy Marie, The Celestial Radio (*Wr.*, July).
 Davis, John P., The Waters of Megara (*Op.*, Nov.).
 De Polo, Harold, Old-Fashioned Methods (*Fl.*, Dec. 31); Faith (*Fl.*, Jan. 14); The Souse in Cabin 8 (*Fl.*, Feb. 4); Open and Shut (*Fl.*, Feb. 25); Duty (*D. F.*, July 14).
 Delmar, Viña, The Jeer Leader (*L.*, Jan. 21); Patchouli and Billiards (*L.*, Mch. 10); She Saw Two Feet Ahead of Her (*L.*, Apr. 28); Hard as Nails (*R. B.*, Aug.); Da Capo (*L.*, July 23).
 Dickenson, May Freud, The Matinée Wife (*Y.*, June).
 Dickson, S. B., The Comic Strip (*L. H. J.*, Feb.).
 Eastman, Rebecca Hooper, Sylvia's Left Slipper (*C. H.*, May).
 Edgelow, Thomas, That Fatal Fascination (*Clues*, First Apr. No.).
 Edmonds, Walter D., My Lady's Tea (*Atl.*, Mch.).
 Ellerbe, Alma and Paul, The Tide of Spring (*W. H. C.*, Mch.); Ann Felicity and the Bad Heart (*G. H.*, Apr.); Especially Dance Hall Women (*Ad.*, July 1).
 Erskine, Laurie York, The Lady Assists, (*Col.*, Mch. 3).
 Evans, Ida M., Beauty's Barber (*C. G.*, July).
 Farrell, Andrew, The Old Man (*P. R.*, Aug.).
 Ford, Sewell, Miltiades and the Finger of Fate (*W. H. C.*, June).
 Freedman, David, I Am He (*P. R.*, Oct.); Chiribo (*P. R.*, Jan.); Applesauce and Buttermilk (*P. R.*, Aug.).
 Freeman, C. A., Powder and Lead (*Ac.*, June 20).
 Garrett, A. R., Enough Rope (*Ad.*, Feb. 1).
 Gilkyson, Walter, Spanish Primitives (*Scr.*, Oct.).
 Gordon, Eugene, Cold-Blooded (*S. E. Q.*, First No., June, 1928—Annual).
 Graeve, Oscar, Exit Pom-Pom (*D.*, Feb.); One Summer Long Ago (*H. B.*, Aug.).
 Haines, Thomas Rann, Soapy Makes Gestures (*Clues*, Sec. Feb. No.).

- Hall, Holworthy, The Suitable Incumbent (*McCall*, Apr.).
Hall, Wilbur, The Blunderin' Fool (*S. S.*, July 10).
Hanlon, Brooke, Girlish Dreams (*D. L.*, Apr.).
Harding, W. C., The Unsworn Deputy (*S. S.*, Apr. 25).
Harmer, Walter Jones, Old Lonely (*F.*, Aug.).
Haycox, Ernest, The Sheriff of Crooked Rib (*S. S.*, May 25).
Heath, Eric, A Criminal at Large (*Clues*, Sec. Mch. No.).
Henderson, Rose, The Right Technic (*A. A.*, Mch. 3).
Herrick, Maude Zella, Don't Call No Cops (*R. B.*, Feb.).
Hess, Leonard, The Third Bout (*C. T.*, Apr. 15).
Hinds, Roy W., The Log Trappers (*S. S.*, June 10).
Hoover, Edwin Hunt, For Colansas and Corrinne (*E.*, Nov.).
Hope, Edward, The Constant Moon (*L.*, May 26).
Howarth, Kathryn Wilcox, Hi, Asylum! (*G. H.*, Aug.).
Hughes, James Perley, This Budget Business (*Mun.*, July).
Hull, Helen, En Route (*Col.*, Feb. 18).
Hume, Cyril, Hell Gate Tommy (*H.*, May).
Huston, McCready, Orphans' Oranges (*McCall*, July).
Irvine, Bryan, Underground (*D. S. M.*, July 21).
Irwin, Inez Haynes, The Duck and the Dove (*W. H. C.*, Feb.).
James, Arthur Evan, The Rattlesnake Murder (*D. F.*, June 16).
Janis, Elsie, and Markey, Gene, Listen, Baby! (*R. B.*, May).
John, William M., Get That, Hombre (*Ranch Romances*, Sec. Mch. No.).
Jones, Idwal, Marsh Duck (*Am. Merc.*, Apr.).
Jordan, Elizabeth, The Satellite (*Mun.*, Jan.).
Josselyn, Talbert, The Impossible Mr. Egger (*R. B.*, Oct.).
Justin, Viola, Special Delivery (*A. A.*, Oct. 8).
Kahler, Hugh MacNair, Right of Way (*S. E. P.*, June 16).
Kelland, Clarence Budington, Scattergood and the Six Big Men (*Am.*, May).
Keller, David H., The Little Husbands (*W. T.*, July).
Kerr, Sophie, One Way to Choose a Dog (*W. H. C.*, Aug.).
Kirk, R. G., Sex Story—Male (*S. E. P.*, Nov. 12).
Kirk, Victorine, The Wedding Bouquet (*McCall*, June).
Koll, Melanie, Rich Man, Poor Man (*R. B.*, Nov.).
Krebs, Roland, The Naked Pie (*W. S.*, Mch. 24); Mercy and the Moron (*L.*, July 23).
Kyne, Peter B., The Way of a Maid (*Col.*, Feb. 25); Nobody's Fool (*Col.*, Apr. 14).

- La Roe, G. Warden, When Knights Were Old (*C. L.*, Apr.)
- Layton, Mark, The Floor That Was too Clean (*Clues*, First Apr. No.).
- Lea, Fannie Heaslip, Not a New Story (*S. E. P.*, June 16).
- Levien, Sonya, Doubling in Love (*C. T.*, Dec. 18).
- Lovecraft, H. P., Pickman's Model (*W. T.*, Oct.).
- McDonald, Warren A., A Matter of Inches (*Op.*, Feb.).
- Mack, Thomas, The Ultimate Collector (*Clues*, First Apr. No.).
- Marquis, Don, We Juliets (*Col.*, May 5); The Making of a Liar (*Scr.*, Aug.); An Old Charge (*Col.*, Aug. 4.)
- Marzoni, Pettersen, A Matter of Habit (*B. B.*, June).
- Matheus, John F., Antropoi (*Op.*, Aug.).
- Merrill, Kenneth Griggs, "They Stand, Those Halls" (*Scr.*, Dec.).
- Miller, Warren Hastings, High Tension (*B. B.*, Mch.).
- Mitchell, Ruth Comfort, I Had a Little Husband (*W. H. C.*, Dec.).
- Moore, Olga, Lonesome for My Shoes Blues (*C. T.*, July 15.)
- Moore, Samuel Taylor, A World's Champion (*Mun.*, July).
- Morgan, Basset, A Thief of Tinian Time (*Év.*, Aug.).
- Morris, Emanuel, Schubert's Serenade (*W.*, Dec. 18).
- Niven, Frederick, Pass! (*Pop.*, Oct. 1).
- O'Neil, George, Wistful Weather (*P. R.*, Aug.).
- Parkhill, Forbes, Win, Lose or Draw (*S. S.*, Feb. 10).
- Paul, Nina Howard, Hardfried (*S. S.*, Aug. 25).
- Perry, Montanye, The Lily (*McCall*, Apr.).
- Perry, Peter, The Ghost House (*Fl.*, Jan. 7); Blodgett's Return (*Fl.*, Jan. 21); Twenty Drops (*Fl.*, Feb. 18); The Broken Umbrella (*Fl.*, Feb. 25); The Row in Darrow Row (*Fl.*, Mch. 3); The Miracle (*Fl.*, April 28); King Yellow (*Fl.*, May 5).
- Phillips, Teresa Hyde, Leave It to Spring (*C. T.*, Apr. 8).
- Pierce, Frank Richardson, The Ice Goes Out (*Ad.*, July 1); Sweet Water (*S. S.*, July 25).
- Pladwell, E. S., The Shield of His People (*B. B.*, Jan.); A Ten Thousand Dollar Romeo (*S. S.*, May 25).
- Plum, Mark, Snow Men (*Mys.*, Apr.).
- Poate, Ernest, M., He Wasn't Afraid (*D. S. M.*, Mch. 3).
- Price, Frank, Light and Shade (*Fl.*, Mch. 24).
- Rarig, Frances Hulbert, Pop's Ploughing (*Atl.*, Feb.).

- Roberts, Austin, *The Black Bandit* (*Fl.*, Nov. 19).
 Robin, Max, *Nostalgia* (*Men.*, Nov.).
 Roche, Arthur Somers, *The Market Price* (*L.*, Dec. 17);
 Give Them What They Want (*L.*, Jan. 28).
 Rogers, M. I. H., \$5000—Dead (*D. S. M.*, July 21).
 Roosevelt, Theodore, *Steward, Four More of the Same* (*Scr.*,
 May).
 Rosenberg, George, *Mustang Trap* (*Cow.*, Sec. Mch. Ed.)
 Royal, Richard, *When Freedom Hurt* (*D. S. M.*, May 19).
 Ryan, Stella, *Top Gallant* (*P. R.*, Oct.).
 St. John, Adela Rogers, and Hyland, Dick, *The Front Run-*
 ner (*C. H.*, Nov.); *Cutie Complex* (*McClure*, Aug.).
 Sanborn, Ruth Burr, *An Errand for Cousin Laura* (*Col.*,
 Nov. 5); *Round Garters* (*Col.*, Dec. 24); *Susan Is Seri-*
 ous (*Col.*, Feb. 4).
 Sanders, Charles Wesley, *A Solomon of the Ranges* (*Ev.*,
 Aug.).
 Sanford, Winifred, *Windfall* (*Am. Merc.*, June).
 Sangster, Margaret E., *The Reddest Rose Tree* (*D.*, May).
 Say, Harold Bradley, *Mr. Doolittle Visits the War* (*War.*,
 Feb. 16).
 Shipp, Margaret Busbee, *Old Stuff* (*L.*, Nov. 19).
 Slusser, Herbert, *Summer Rain* (*Ch.*, June).
 Smith, Maxwell, *The Limp* (*Fl.*, Mch. 10).
 Stanley, Elizabeth, *Deep Canyons* (*Atl.*, Feb.).
 Starrett, Vincent, *Persons Unknown* (*S. S.*, Feb. 25).
 Stone, Albert Williams, *Boss of the Circle Bar* (*S. S.*, May 10).
 Stone, Elinore Cowan, *The Little Black Box* (*W. H. C.*, Jan.).
 Stone, Grace Zaring, *Mistress Joachim* (*Atl.*, Dec.).
 Storrs, M. L., *How Very Appropriate!* (*Y.*, June).
 Sturm, Justin, *The Well-Known Secret* (*P. R.*, Dec.).
 Sullivan, Edgar F., *Being a Regular Fellow* (*W.*, Nov. 13);
 His Empty Sleeve (*W.*, Jan. 8).
 Swain, John D., *One-Round Seller Goes Ten* (*S. S.*, Apr.
 10); *Double Trouble* (*D. S. M.*, May 26).
 Taylor, Mary Imlay, *Sharks* (*Mun.*, Nov.).
 Taylor, Merlin Moore, *Ripe Peach Odor* (*B. M.*, June).
 Teichner, Miriam, *Legs of the Goddess* (*W.*, Mch. 4).
 Thompson, Don H., *Behind the Curtain* (*Fl.*, Dec. 3); *A*
 Matter of Averages (*Fl.*, Apr. 21).
 Tisdale, Frederick, *This Hero Stuff* (*L.*, Nov. 26).

- Titus, Harold, Gold Is Where You Find It (*Am.*, May).
 Toohey, John Peter, High Hat (*Mun.*, Nov.); The Little New Neighbor (*P. R.*, Feb.).
 Torrey, Grace, Putnam III (*W. H. C.*, Jan.).
 Triem, Frank, The Last Grin (*W. S.*, Mch. 24).
 Tyler, Charles W., Too Soft (*D. S. M.*, Feb. 18).
 Valentine, Return of the Adjusters (*Fl.*, Mch. 10); The Other Man (*Fl.*, May 12).
 Van Riper, Donald, The Way of Some Flesh (*D. S. M.*, Mch. 3).
 Vandergrift, Wonson, Pug Morrissey's Waterloo (*Fl.*, Dec. 31).
 Van Slyke, Lucille, Dowry (*McCall*, Aug.).
 Volney, Dex, Snow-Melt (*S. S.*, Nov. 25).
 Ware, Edmund, The Hard Guy (*L. H. J.*, Feb.).
 Ware, Edward Parrish, Tomahawk (*Fl.*, Feb. 18); The Devil Winks (*Fl.*, Mch. 3); Borrowed Trouble (*Fl.*, Mch. 17); Not Enough Soap (*Fl.*, Mch. 24); Hitched to the Wind (*Fl.*, Apr. 14); The Wheels Turn (*Fl.*, Apr. 28); They Toil Not (*Fl.*, May 5); The Last Report (*D. F.*, July 7).
 Waters, Don, The Use o' Both (*A. A.*, Feb. 4).
 Watkins, Richard Howells, The Watch and the Fist (*Fl.*, May 19).
 Weber, Leonora Mattingly, The Donoraugh's Tug-of-War (*Ch.*, Aug.).
 Weiman, Rita, The Kick (*R. B.*, Dec.).
 Wescott, Glenway, The Dove Came Down (*H.*, Apr.).
 Weston, George, The New Butler (*L. H. J.*, June).
 White, Nelia Gardner, White Birches (*Am.*, June); Afterglow (*P.*, Aug.).
 Wire, H. C., The Tunnel-mouth Killer (*S. S.*, Oct. 25); Worthless Money (*S. S.*, June, 25).

LIST IV

Of short short stories the following rank highest:

- Altimus, Henry, The Coward (*Col.*, Aug. 4).
 Anderson, Sherwood, A Jury Case (*Am. Merc.*, Dec.).
 Benedict, Libbian, The Apartment (*H.*, Nov.).
 Benefield, Barry, Mr. Pullman's Pink (*Col.*, May 19).
 Brush, Katharine, Great Man (*H.*, Oct.).

- Chapman, Maristan, Crowded (*Atl.*, May).
 Clarke, Mabel McElliott, Chimera (*L.*, Mch. 24).
 Cobb, Irvin S., "Cruelty to Animals" (*H. B.*, Feb.).
 Cooper, Mary Lispenard, The Punch and Judy Show (*H.*, Feb.).
 Derieux, Samuel A., The Battle of Pine Barrens (*W. H. C.*, June).
 Dickinson, Roy, Fragments from the Hills (*Scr.*, Oct.);
 The Pacifist, Immoral Circumstance.
 Frost, Meigs O., The Start (*R. B.*, Mch.).
 Gabriel, Gilbert, Twelve Tristans (*C.*, Dec.).
 Gaines, Clarence H., Six Easy Pieces (*H.*, Nov.).
 Gale, Zona, Bridal Pond (*Am. Merc.*, Feb.).
 Glenn, Isa., At the Full of the Moon (*L.*, Feb. 11).
 Morris, Gray, The Trial of Strength (*Atl.*, Nov.).
 Greenough, Walter, The Monarch and the Mongrel (*Col.*, Nov. 5).
 Hoyt, Nancy, Golden Arrows (*H. B.*, Mch.).
 Kahler, Hugh MacNair, The Long Arm (*Col.*, May 26).
 Lardner, Ring W., There Are Smiles (*H. I. and C.*, Apr.).
 Marquis, Don, A King's Job (*Col.*, July 7); In the Twilight
 (*Col.*, July 14).
 Mountjoy, M. W., Up Near Tawas (*H.*, Nov.).
 Paradise, Viola, The Third Task (*H. B.*, Mch.).
 Parker, Dorothy, A Telephone Call (*Book.*, Jan.).
 Poole, Ernest, Two Young Colonial Dames (*D.*, July).
 Rice, Elmer L., Conscience (*Col.*, Feb. 11).
 Richardson, Norval, Day out of Dark (*L.*, Jan. 14).
 Robins, Nelson, Old Lige (*Fl.*, May 26).
 Robinson, Henry Morton, A Clean-Up in Stratford (*Fl.*,
 May 12).
 Singmaster, Elsie, The Pioneer, or A Lover Rewarded (*Col.*,
 Oct. 29).
 Spears, Raymond S., Empty Bottles (*Ad.*, July 1).
 Tarleton, Fiswoode, Holy Laugh (*E.*, Mch.).
 Thorpe, Merle, The Ham Actor (*Col.*, Jan. 14).
 Tiernan, John L., One Minute to Twelve (*Fl.*, May 12).
 Way, Isabelle, Why Not? (*E.*, Jan.-Feb.).
 Whitney, Parkhurst, A Guest for Dinner (*Col.*, Jan. 21).
 Wilde, Percival, Behind the Door (*Col.*, Feb. 4); The Wit-
 ness (*Col.*, Aug. 11).

Williams, Ben Ames, Habit (*Col.*, Oct 1).
 Woollcott, Alexander, Verdun Belle (*Col.*, Oct. 22).
 Worts, George F., The Fighting Heart (*Col.*, Oct. 15).

LIST V

Of short short stories the following rank second:

Adams, Ned, Old Mammy (*Scr.*, July); Bur Rabbit in Red Hill Churchyard (*Scr.* July).
 Ames, John, News (*Fl.*, Feb. 18); Going Straight (*Fl.*, Apr. 28).
 Augsburg, Paul Deresco, Blue Dagger (*S.S.*, Oct. 10).
 Bernstein, Eve, Tragedy (*Scr.*, Apr.).
 Brooks, George S., Hallohran (*L.*, Oct. 29); A Thing Like That (*L.*, Oct. 22); The Mayor's Butler (*L.*, Jan. 28); The Reprisal (*L.*, Feb. 4).
 Brush, Katharine, The Glamorous Lady (*Col.*, July 21).
 Cannon, Ralph, The New Page (*Fl.*, May 26).
 Clarke, Mabel McElliott, A Good Day (*L.*, June 30).
 Cohen, Octavus Roy, The Glitter of Diamonds (*Col.*, Dec. 17).
 Connell, Richard, A Friendly Visit from Mr. Sitz. (*C. H.*, Feb.).
 Croy, Homer, Honeymoon (*C.*, July).
 Davenport, Walter, The Lady Forgot to Say (*Col.*, Mch. 31).
 Detzer, Karl W., Luck (*C.*, Nov.).
 Dickinson, Roy, Fragments from the Hills (*Scr.*, Oct.); On the Third Day, Mountain Solitude.
 Douglas, Marjory Stoneman, Portuguese Pink (*Arch.*, Sec. No., Jan.).
 Fielding, B. M., Pants and Perplexity (*B. B.*, Jan.).
 Ford, Corey, Sea Gold (*Col.*, Mch. 17).
 Gordon, Edythe Mae, Subversion (*S.E.Q.*, First No.—Annual—June).
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